

# ELECT IN THE SON

*A Study of the  
Doctrine of  
Election*

..... ROBERT SHANK

Introduction by  
William W. Adams

**Front Flap:**

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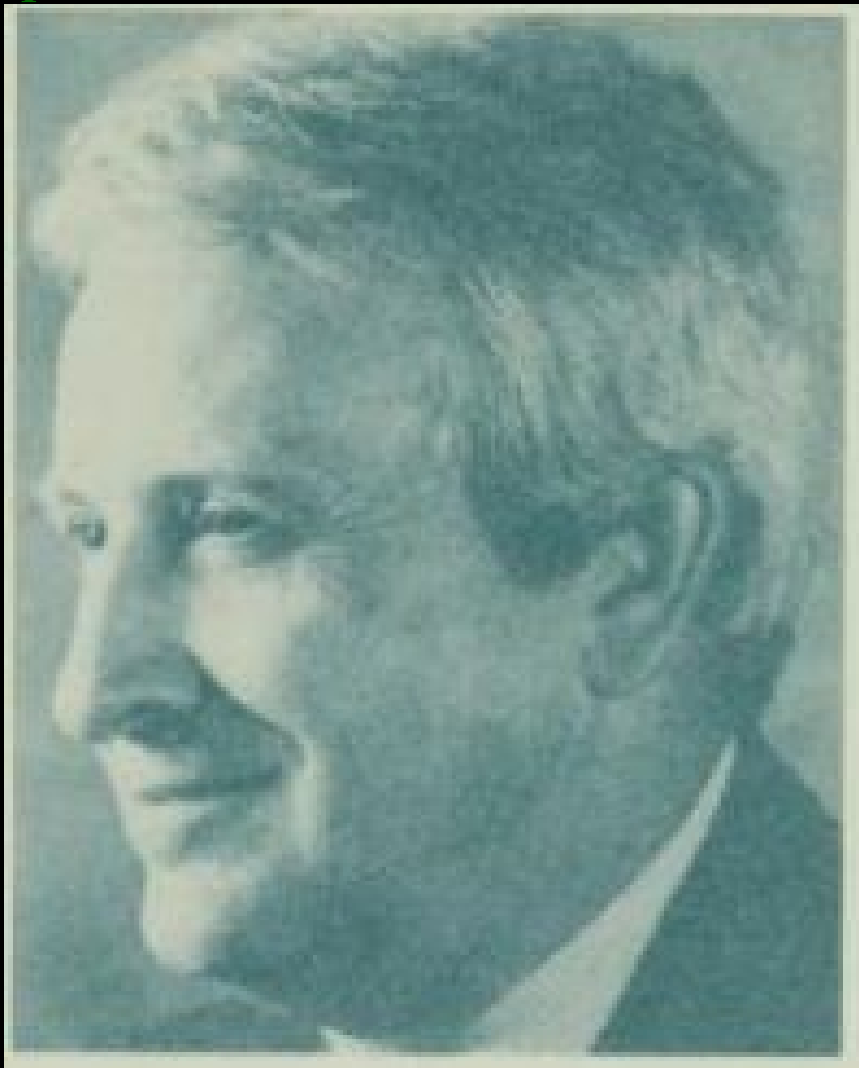
William W. Adams, Th. D.

In a penetrating study of all pertinent Scripture passages, the author demonstrates that Calvin's doctrine of the unconditional election and reprobation of particular men is without foundation in the Scriptures and derives from





*Elect in the Son* to be the definitive work on the difficult question of election."



**Back Flap:**

Robert Shank is known













*Elect in the Son*

*For the grace of God has  
appeared for the salvation of all  
men.*

TITUS 2:11 RSV

*Even so then at this present time  
also there is a remnant  
according to the election of  
grace.*

ROMANS 11:5

# **Elect in the Son**

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## PREFACE

TEN YEARS have passed since publication of my work *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*. The book was the outcome of a long, exhaustive study in a problem area of doctrine undertaken for my own satisfaction, with no thought of writing on the question. From the perspective of the years, I may now say that God, as I sincerely believed, was in the writing of the book and the years of study out of which it came.

The doctrine of perseverance is not finally defined until one defines also the doctrine of election. My study of the doctrine of perseverance laid the

















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# INTRODUCTION

THE UNUSUAL importance of Robert Shank's work *Life in the Son*, which I recognized when first I read the manuscript some ten years ago, has been confirmed in the decade now past. The wide distribution of the book, now in a sixth large printing, and the continuing demand for it ten years after publication reflect the significance of Mr. Shank's contribution to our understanding in an area of doctrine of critical importance and long debated.

From the pen of Mr. Shank now comes another of the most meaningful books of this generation. To those who have































# FOREWORD

TO THE EIGHTH PRINTING  
OF *LIFE IN THE SON* AND  
THE THIRD PRINTING OF *ELECT  
IN THE SON*

It is my considered judgment that Robert Shank's two books *Life in the Son* and *Elect in the Son* will stand against any attempt to refute them from the Scriptures, and that the passing of time can only prove them to be finally definitive on the long-debated theological questions of election and perseverance. I commend them to all students of the Scriptures and to every sincere steward of holy truth.

WILLIAM W. ADAMS  
*Kansas City, Missouri*  
*May 7, 1971*

## *Thy Kingdom Come*

*Thy kingdom come, thy will be  
done on earth as it is in heaven.*

MATTHEW 6:10

*Come, ye blessed of my Father,  
inherit the kingdom prepared for  
you from the foundation of the  
world.*

MATTHEW 25:34

# Chapter 1: THY KINGDOM COME

IN A DAY when the foundations of society are crumbling, a day of gathering storm and deepening gloom, a day of unprecedented peril in which thoughtful men speak of the collapse of civilization and the possible annihilation of cities and nations - even of mankind, the sovereignty of God is an unfailing encouragement that lights the path of the just and affords assurance to all the faithful, who take great comfort in the words of James in the historic council of the church at Jerusalem: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).



























## Chapter 2: ELECT IN THE SON

IN THE Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul follows his brief salutation with a doxology praising God for the grace given to us in Christ, grace that spans the ages from before the foundation of the world to the dispensation of the fullness of times. The paramount importance of the passage rests in the fact that it contains the Bible's most definitive statement of a profound doctrine of the Holy Scriptures: God's gracious election of men in Christ before the foundation of the world and the predestination of the elect to holy privilege and everlasting felicity. Of all passages of

Scripture touching the matter of election, Ephesians 1:3-14 is the foundation passage. Referring to Ephesians 1:4,9 and the cognate verse II Timothy 1:9, G. C. Berkouwer observes that “the history of the doctrine of election may be interpreted as an effort to understand the meaning of these words.”

*[G. C. Berkouwer, Divine Election, p. 135. Professor of Systematic Theology at Free University of Amsterdam, Berkouwer is among the foremost Calvinist theologians of today and representative of the Reformed tradition.]*

## **1. Election Christocentric**



Psalm of praise for the redemption and consummation of created things, fulfilled in Christ through the Spirit according to the eternal purpose of God. This fulfillment is contemplated specially in the relation of believers to Christ, chosen in Him, redeemed, enlightened, sealed.....

From first to last, the fullness of the Divine blessing is shown to be realised 'in Christ' (v. 3). In Him God chose us (v.4). In the Beloved He graced us (v. 6). In Him we have our redemption (v. 7), even as God purposed in

Him to sum up all things in the Christ (v. 10). In Him the faithful of Israel were made a Divine heritage (v. 11).

*[Westcott's exposition of vs. 11. 12 takes account of the fact that eklerothemen is passive rather than active (the converse is implied in AV), reflected in his rendering "were made a Divine heritage."]*

In Him the Gentiles found a place (v. 13). In Him they were sealed by the Spirit (v. 13), the pledge of a larger hope (v. 14).

*[B. F. Westcott. Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: the Greek Text with Notes and Addenda, pp. 4f.]*



## **A. Christ, the Elect**

The Canons of Dort, referring to Ephesians 1:4, affirm that election is in Christ, “whom [God] from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation to salvation” (1:7). Calvin, following Augustine, observed that “in the very Head of the Church we have a bright mirror of free election” (3:22:1). That Christ assumed his Messianic office by the Father’s appointment is clearly affirmed in the Scriptures. Matthew, whose Gospel abounds with applications of Old Testament passages, witnesses that in Jesus is fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah concerning an elect Servant of

Jehovah: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles" (Matt. 12:18). Jehovah's election of the Servant-Messiah is declared in Isaiah 42:1-7;

**Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ... I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thy hand and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, (vs.**

1, 6)

The cognate passage Isaiah 49:1-13 makes the same affirmation of Jehovah's election of the Servant-Messiah:

Jehovah has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name.... [Thus] saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him ... It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee

for a light to the Gentiles,  
that thou mayest be my  
salvation unto the end of the  
earth. (vs. 1, 5, 6)

Delitzsch comments that,  
beginning with Isaiah 42:1,  
Jehovah

introduces His "servant." In  
ch. 41:8 this epithet was  
applied to the nation, which  
had been chosen as the  
servant and for the service of  
Jehovah. But the servant of  
Jehovah who is presented to  
us here is distinct from Israel  
and has so strong an  
individuality and such  
marked personal features

that the expression cannot possibly be merely a personified collective. Nor can the prophet himself be intended; for what is here affirmed of this servant of Jehovah goes infinitely beyond anything to which a prophet was ever called, or of which a man was ever capable. It must therefore be the future Christ; and this is the view taken in the Targum, where the translation of our prophecy commences thus: "Ha' 'abhdi Meshicha." Still there must be a connection between the national sense, in which the expression "servant of

Jehovah” was used in ch. 41:8, and the personal sense in which it is used here. The coming Saviour, appears as the embodied idea of Israel, i.e. as its truth and reality embodied in one person. The idea of “the servant of Jehovah” assumed, to speak figuratively, the form of a pyramid. The base was Israel as a whole; the central section was that Israel which was not merely Israel according to the flesh, but according to the spirit also; the apex is the person of the Mediator of salvation springing out of Israel. And the last of the three is

regarded (1) as the centre of the circle of the promised kingdom-the second David; (2) the centre of the circle of the people of salvation-the second Israel; (3) the centre of the circle of the human race-the second ... . . . . .

Israel's true nature as a servant of God, which had its roots in (he election and calling of Jehovah and manifested itself in conduct and action in harmony with this calling, is all concentrated in Him, the One, as its ripest fruit. The gracious purposes of God towards the whole human race, which were manifested

even in the election of Israel,  
are brought by Him to their  
full completion .....

"Behold my servant, whom I  
uphold; mine elect, whom  
my soul loveth: I have laid  
my Spirit upon him..."

*[Franz Delitzsch, Biblical  
Commentary on the  
Prophecies of Isaiah, Vol II,  
pp. 174f.]*

The elect Servant of Jehovah,  
“chosen of God and precious” (1  
Pet. 2:4), was “foreordained  
before the foundation of the  
world” (I Pet. 1:20). Throughout  
His ministry in the days of His  
flesh, Jesus moved always in the  
awareness of His appointment by  
the Father. He spoke of himself







Messiah in the person of Jesus (the human).

## **B. Christ, the Foundation of Election**

In Him who is *the* Elect from eternity is posited the gracious election of men. To refer again to the Canons of Dort: God from eternity appointed Christ “the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation to salvation” (1:7). In the realization of the kingdom purpose of God, the election is first of *Christ* and then of men *in Him*. Clement, first-century bishop at Rome who could speak of Peter and Paul as being of his own generation, wrote in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, “God

... chose out the Lord Jesus Christ, and us through him for ‘a peculiar people’ "(64:1). Godet affirms that, in the election,

**Christ Himself is its first object: and hence He is called the Elect, absolutely speaking, Isa.42:1; Luke 9:35 (most approved reading). His brethren are elect in Him, Eph. 1:4-6.**

*[Frederick L. Godet. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 326, italics his.]*

Calvin insisted that the election to salvation is in Christ. Representative of numerous affirmations are the following:

[Christ] is the beloved Son, in whom the love of the Father dwells, and from whom it afterwards extends to us. Thus Paul says, "In whom he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). (3:2:32).....

.....Paul testifies indeed that we were chosen before the foundation of the world; but, he adds, in Christ (Eph. 1:4). (E.P. 8:6)

.....the whole sum of our salvation and every single part of it are comprehended in Christ..... (2:16:19)

# 1. Christ Instrumental in Election

Two aspects are intrinsic in the role of Christ in election: he is *instrumental* and *comprehensive*. Important questions arise concerning the instrumentality of Christ in election, the first of which is. Was it necessary? Was the temporal career of Jesus essential to the realization of election, or was it actually extrinsic to the election? Was it the sole means, or at least *a* means, on which the election could be predicated, or was it optional? Was the redemptive career of Jesus in *time* actually decisive, or instead merely symbolic-only a temporal







Berkouwer, a leading exponent of Calvinism today, rejects any abstract decree of election deriving from mere determinism apart from God's love and grace operating in and through Christ. He asserts that when one reflects on the counsel of God in election,

... Ephesians 1:4 is always encountered ... for that text praises the election of God—not as an abstract act, as the counsel of a *potentia absoluta* [but] in such a manner that it can be immediately followed by these words: "having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5). This





James Denney, in his classic on the doctrine of redemption, writes

Even in the eleventh century, Anselm met people who made the objections to the Christian faith which are current today. If God had to redeem men, why could He not redeem them sola voluntate, by the mere exercise of His will? Why speak of redemption at all? Whose slaves are we from whom God cannot deliver us merely by putting forth His almighty power? If you speak of being redeemed from His anger, is not His anger

simply His will to punish,  
and can He not change His  
will without more ado?

*[James Denney, The  
Christian Doctrine of  
Reconciliation, p. 66.]*

Denney cites his own  
contemporary, the Catholic  
theologian M. Riviere, who  
wrote in a theological journal

If the Christ had not suffered,  
if He had not died upon the  
cross, would He  
nevertheless have redeemed  
us? To this question Catholic  
theologians unanimously  
answer in the affirmative. It  
follows with perfect  
clearness that neither the

suffering, the death, nor the cross represents the essential, or, to use the language of the school, the formal element in redemption. They are so many contingent circumstances, the reason for which is to be sought [in the nature of the mystery, not in its absolute necessities].

*[Ibid., p. 265, bracketed material translated from the French text included in Denney's work]*

But contrary to Riviere's assumption (an assumption surely far from "unanimous" among Catholic theologians of

his day or any other generation), the death of Christ was essential to His work of redemption. This was certain in the mind of Jesus, if we accept the witness of the Gospels to His words about His redemptive mission:

**The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many ... the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world ... the Son of Man must suffer many things and be slain ... even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ... and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me ... for this cause came I unto this hour.**

The Gospels abound with these and other assertions of Jesus about the necessity of His death on the cross for the redemption of men. Appearing to His Apostles and other disciples in Jerusalem the evening of the day of His resurrection, (Jesus) said to them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in

**the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me . . . . Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and**



remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. (Lk. 24:44, 46-48)

Turning again to Denney's great work, we read

The one thing that the apostles have to tell about Christ-what they deliver first of all to all men-is that Christ died for our sins. He suffered for them once, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

*[Ibid., p. 268.]*

Regardless of the relative merits and deficiencies of Anselm's doctrine of the atonement, he is correct in his construction of a rationale of the incarnation. Denney writes

**The title of Anselm's famous work *Cur Deus Homo*? Why did God become man?—intimates that what he is in quest of is the rationale of Christianity itself.....**

.....

**Put briefly, the answer to the question is that God became man because only thus could sin be dealt with for**







ransom for all (I Tim. 2:6).

The atonement wrought by Christ was by no means symbolic. It was an authentic saving act made necessary by the holy character of God Himself, a saving act whereby God can adopt into sonship and into His kingdom men who have transgressed His righteous laws, outraged His holiness, and of themselves are sinners. The death of Jesus Christ was not pageantry. It was a decisive saving act in which Jesus Christ was truly instrumental in the election of men to salvation and the everlasting kingdom of God. Berkouwer writes

... in Christ there was a

decisive happening in history, an act of God in which Christ “has earned for us the grace of God and salvation (Inst. II, xvii).” Although Calvin did not accept the concept of persuasion, and although he indicates that God the Father with His love precedes the historical reconciliation which He founded in Jesus Christ (ibid., II, xvi, 3), this preceding does not imply a devaluation of the historical work of Christ, as if eternity would make any occurrence in time meaningless. It implies, rather, that God (as Calvin paradoxically puts it)









*application* of the election to men:

In its simplest and most comprehensive form, the dogma of predestination consists, then, in the assertion that the divine predestination is the election of Jesus Christ. But the concept of election has a double reference—to the election and to the elected. And so, too, the name of Jesus Christ has within itself the double reference: the One called by this name is both very God and very man. Thus the simplest form of the dogma may be divided at

once into the two assertions  
that Jesus Christ is the  
electing God, and that He is  
also elected  
man.....

.....  
[Christ] is not only the  
Elected. He is also Himself  
the Elector, and His election  
must be understood as  
active. It is true that as the  
Son of God given by the  
Father to be one with man  
and to take to Himself the  
form of man, He is elected. It  
is also true that He does not  
elect alone, but in company  
with the electing of the  
Father and the Holy Spirit.  
But He does elect.

*[Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Volume II: The Doctrine of God, pp. 103,105.]*

Thus Christ becomes the electing God as truly as the Father, and the personal election of individual men becomes disclosed in Christ-not symbolically, as the reflection of a fiat election determined in the counsels of eternity before the foundation of the world, but as historical, knowable reality in the personal experience of men.

Berkouwer rejects Barth's thesis:

**Barth's appeal to Scripture for his doctrine of Christ as subject of election is limited**

almost wholly to a few passages in the Gospel of John which speak of Christ's calling and election to the apostolate.....

When Barth poses as main thesis for his doctrine of election that Christ Himself is the electing God, the question must be asked whether his appeal to John's words indeed warrants this thesis.

*[Berkouwer, op cit., pp. 157-160.]*

In the judgment of Berkouwer, Barth's thesis is not substantiated.

It is interesting to note that



the structure of the election of God, namely, in the emphasis on Christ's full initiative.... This is not surprising, says Calvin, for the Father acts through Christ and Christ with the Father.

*[Ibid. p. 158.]*

Berkouwer appends a footnote, “See Calvin on John 15:16,

*[The text reads John 15:18, a typographical error.]*

where he says that this election cannot be detached from eternal salvation.” Especially pertinent in the passage cited by Berkouwer are Calvin’s words



**That Christ declares himself to be the Author of both [election to salvation and ordination to the Apostolate] is not wonderful; since it is only by him that God acts, and he acts along with the Father. So then, both election and ordination belong equally to both.**

*[Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John. Vol. II, p. 120.]*

Calvin's thesis that Christ is "the author of election" and "elects in common with the Father" has something in common with Barth's thesis that Christ is "the electing God." But Barth's

definition of the implications of his central thesis differs radically from any possible implications of Calvin's thesis, which in his theology is subordinate rather than central. Rejecting Barth's thesis, Berkouwer continues

**Without minimizing at all the unique significance of this act of Christ in electing his apostles, we ought to note that the Bible also directs our attention to Christ as the Chosen One of God.....**

**We see then that Christ is presented to us, not only in His activity, but also in His passivity, as the Chosen One**

of God, in whom God has His good pleasure . . . . In the New Testament we hear of the counsel of God that is fulfilled in and through Christ, all that the counsel and hand of God had foreordained beforehand to come to pass (Acts 4:28).....

Precisely the same Gospel, which gives such a clear account of Christ's calling the apostles, gives us also the testimony of Christ's submissiveness to the Father. "For I spake not from myself: but the Father that sent me, he hath given me commandment, what I

should say and what I should speak" (John 12:49). Here all our attention is directed to that relationship and hence to the Messiah, to the Servant of the Lord, to the Mediator between God and man.

*[Berkouwer, op. cit., 158f.]*

Berkouwer implies that we must choose whether Christ is the *subject* or the *agent* of election, the elect or the elector, the chosen or the chooser. Here is a fallacy so often encountered in theological readings: an assumed *either... or*. Berkouwer opts for the former category and rejects the latter. But both are equally Biblical and represent valid



Exelexamen, I have chosen, indicates here the call to faith, not to the apostleship; by this word to choose Jesus would designate the act by which He has drawn them to Himself and detached them from the world; the thought of divine predestination is not found here, any more than in ver. 16.

*[Frederick Louis Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. II. p. 302.]*

Godet is correct in his assertion that the thought of divine predestination is not found in John 15:19 (especially in the sense of Calvin's definition of









*borne and by whom He is satisfied for the travail of His soul (Isa. 53:11). For a consideration of the question. Whom does the Father give to Jesus? see Appendix B of my work Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance.]*

A consideration of the relation between the decree of election in the eternal counsel of God and Christ's saving act of atonement in history establishes the real instrumentality of Christ as "the electing God." Berkouwer writes

**It is clear that for Paul there is no discrepancy to be bridged between what happened in eternity and**

what happened in time. And he finds it impossible to think of the plan of God without thinking of Jesus Christ; as Van Leeuwen remarks, with reference to Ephesians 1:4, "the counsel of God is not an immutable and fixed decree." This fixedness and immutability are foreign to Paul's hymn on the love of God. The power and evidence of Paul's testimony have safeguarded the Church and theology at decisive moments against a devaluation of God's election to such a fixedness of decree, which is only later realized in the work of Christ.

Scripture docs say “through Christ” with respect to salvation, and there is no need at all to balk at the word “instrumental”—as when Paul writes that we are reconciled with God through (dia) the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10)-provided that the word “instrumental” is stripped of all impersonal connotations, and that we think of God’s act as being in Christ who is the author of our salvation (Heb. 2:10).... There is no discrepancy for Paul between “in Christ” and “through Christ.”

*[Berkouwer. op. cit., pp. 148f.]*

Berkouwer here affirms that the decree of election in eternity becomes *fixed* only when it becomes realized in the redemptive work of Christ in time. This is true (but certainly not consonant with Calvin's definition of election, which will be cited later in this chapter). Writing from the context of Paul's Ephesian doxology, Berkouwer declares

... God elects us in Christ and because of Christ ... Paul often speaks of "through Christ." "In" and "through" are not meant as two different aspects of one and the same situation. They

both indicate the one electing act of God which in history becomes revealed as His act in Christ (the atonement, as context makes clear).

*[Ibid., p. 148.]*

Berkouwer is correct: Christ's saving act of atonement in *time* is the historical event in which the eternal decree of election becomes fixed. The atonement is a reflection of the decree of election in the counsels of eternity; but it is infinitely more: it is itself "the one electing act of God."

The decree in eternity was only of the intention of the temporal act. In the counsels of eternity, in



*Christ's act of atonement will be treated in the following chapter.]*

## **2. Christ Comprehensive in Election**

Instrumental in election, both by the Father's appointment and by His own initiative, Christ is also *comprehensive* in election. The comprehensiveness is circumstantial, deriving from His instrumentality.

In the Ephesian doxology, Paul is emphatic in his affirmation that the gracious election is “in Christ... in him ... in the Beloved.” That the election to salvation is in Christ is a truth so obvious in the Scriptures that the point need not be labored.



Representative of many pertinent exegetical comments that might be cited is the comment of Lightfoot on Ephesians 1:4:

en Christo] i.e. 'by virtue of our incorporation in, our union with, Christ.' As God seated us in heaven 'in Christ' (ii. 6), so also He bestowed His blessings upon us there in Him.....

en auto] i.e. en Christo. In God's eternal purpose the believers are contemplated as existing in Christ, as the Head, the Summary, of the race. The ekelege (the election) has no separate

existence independently of the *eklektos* (Luke 9:35, 28:35) [the chosen One, Christ]. The election of Christ involves implicitly the election of the Church.

*[J. B. Lightfoot, Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, p. 312.]*

Lightfoot speaks of “our union with Christ.” The election to salvation is only in union with Christ. Thus Christ is the *locus standi* of election, apart from whom no man is elect. As Berkouwer has well said, “There is election only in Christ.” *[Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 149.]* The *locus standi* aspect of election is clearly apparent in the following quotations from Calvin, which

were cited earlier in the chapter:

**[Christ] is the beloved Son, in whom the love of the Father dwells, and from whom it afterwards extends to us. Thus Paul says, "In whom he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).**

**(3:2:32).....**

**Paul testifies indeed that we were chosen before the foundation of the world; but, he adds, in Christ (Eph. 1:4). (E.P. 8:6)**

Consider again Christ in His role as the elect Servant of Jehovah, as portrayed in Isaiah 42:

Behold my servant.....mine elect.....I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house, (vs. 1,6f.)

Here is one of the most beautiful concepts in the Holy Scriptures concerning the instrumentality of Christ in election. Jehovah says of the Servant-Messiah, “[I will] give *thee* for a covenant of the people.” The Messiah is *Himself* the Living Covenant of



## 2. Election Corporate

A second aspect of election is implicit in Paul's Ephesian doxology: the election to salvation is *corporate* as well as Christocentric.

The corporate nature of election has been noted by many. In his comment on Ephesians 1:4, previously cited, Lightfoot writes, "The election of Christ involves implicitly the election of the Church." [*Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 312.*] Westcott comments on Ephesians 1:4, "*exelelexato*] He chose us (i.e. Christians as a body v. 3) for Himself out of the world." [*Westcott, op. cit., p. 8.*] Bloomfield comments on Ephesians 1:5, "...the Apostle

has here no reference to the *personal* election of *individuals....*”[S. T. Bloomfield, *The Greek Testament, with English Poles, Vol. II, p. 299, italics his.*] Lange comments on Ephesians 1:3

... “us” should be taken in its wider meaning... and should not be limited to the Apostle ... nor to the Jewish Christians, but applies to his people, all men, who have become or will become Christians.

[John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Ephesians, p. 28.*]

The corporate inference of





of his epistle:

... gather together in one all things in Christ... the redemption of the purchased possession ... his inheritance in the saints... the church, which is his body ... who has made both one ... to make in himself of twain one new man ... that he might reconcile both unto God in one body ... the household of God ... all the building fitly framed together... an holy temple ... builded together for an habitation of God ... of the same body ... the mystery from the beginning of the

world [now disclosed in] the church [as the fulfillment of] the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ... of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named... glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages... one body... the body of Christ... the whole body fitly joined together... increase of the body... we are members one of another... Christ is the head of the church ... the saviour of the body ... Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the

word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church ... they two shall be one flesh [but] I speak concerning Christ and the church.

The concept of the corporate body of the elect is intrinsic in all the above excerpts. Consider 2:12, “you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise. ...” The concept of the corporate election of Israel, a concept derived from many Scriptures, is clearly apparent. The concept of corporate election is equally apparent in Paul’s assertion that Jews and





Consider the following definitions:

**By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. (3:21:5)**

We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time

incomprehensible  
judgment. (3:21:7)

When God prefers some to others, choosing some and passing others by, the difference does not depend on human dignity or indignity.... If what I teach is true, that those who perish are destined to death by the eternal good pleasure of God, though the reason does not appear, then they are not found but made worthy of destruction . . . . the eternal predestination of God, by which before the fall of Adam He decreed what should take place concerning the



**whole human race and every individual, was fixed and determined . . . . God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom He pleased and reprobated whom He willed.... (E.P. 8:5)**

It is evident from his definitions of election (and reprobation) that Calvin viewed election as both specifically individual and unconditional. A central thesis of Calvin's doctrine of election may be stated thus:

**The election to salvation is of particular men unconditionally, who comprise the corporate body incidentally.**

A central thesis of the Biblical doctrine of election may be stated thus:

**The election to salvation is corporate and comprehends individual men only in identification and association with the elect body.**

With this thesis before us, let us cite again Lange's comment on Romans 8:28-30: "...Christ is the elect in God's real kingdom in the absolute sense, so that all His followers are chosen with Him as organic members, *according to their organic relations* (Eph. 1)." *[Lange. Commentary on the*

*Holy Scriptures: Romans, p. 290.*  
*italics mine.]* Lange cites  
Hoffmann (*Schriftbeweis*. vol. i.  
p. 227) to the effect that “election  
relates not merely to individuals,  
but to the entire body, and,  
accordingly, to individuals as  
members of the body.”[*Ibid.*]  
Barth writes

... an elect man is in any case  
elect in and with the  
community of Jesus Christ....  
Thus every election of  
individuals is an election in  
the sphere of the [elect]  
community—on the basis of  
the fact that this sphere is  
both established and  
marked out in the election of  
Jesus Christ."







**God's eternal purpose in grace:**

**Eph. 1:4, He chose us in Christ that we should be hagogios kai amomous before Him.**

**Col. 1:22, He reconciled us to Himself in Christ, through His death, to present us hagogios kai amomous before Him.**

**Fulfillment corporately (certain):**

**Eph. 5:27, Christ will present the ekklesia to Himself hagia kai amomos.**

**Fulfillment individually**

(contingent):

Col. 1:23, He will present us  
hagious kai amomous before  
Him—if we continue in the  
faith grounded and settled  
and be not moved away from  
the hope of the Gospel.



The fact that the election is corporate and comprehends individuals only in association with the elect body is reflected in many passages of Scripture. For example, in Romans 11 Paul declares that the corporate election of the *Israel* within Israel remained unimpaired, though some of the branches





















John addresses to his little children in the faith in the immediate context of his epistle:

**“Let that therefore remain in you which you have heard from the beginning**

*[the true Gospel, in contrast to the arguments of the Christ-disowners].*

**If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life” (vs. 24f.)**

The “us” from whom the Christ-disowners withdrew is the











comprehends individuals only in identification and association with the elect body. With equal truth, Paul can assure us that God has “chosen us [corporately] in Christ before the foundation of the world” and Peter can admonish us to “give diligence to make your calling and election [individually and personally] sure.”

Westcott comments on  
Ephesians 1: 1

**The three characteristics saints, faithful, in Christ Jesus give a complete and harmonious view of those to whom St. Paul writes. He addresses men who are consecrated to God in a**

Divine Society (saints), who are inspired by a personal devotion towards Him (faithful), who are in Him in Whom the Church finds its unity and life (c.4:16). Thus the order saints, faithful, is seen to be perfectly natural. The two thoughts are complementary: God's will, man's answer. So the thought of the social consecration to God precedes the thought of the continuous individual faith by which the members of the body keep their place in it.

*[Westcott, op. cit., p. 4]*

Reflecting on our considerations



in this chapter, it becomes easier to understand our Lord's severity in his solemn warning that to be drowned in the depth of the sea with a millstone hanged about one's neck would be preferable to offending “one of these little ones which believe in me” (Matt. 18:6). Clement’s comment, in which he presents a paraphrase combining Mark 14:21 and Luke 17:2, is enlightening as reflecting the understanding of a contemporary of Peter, Paul, John, and others of the Apostles:

**Why do we divide and tear asunder the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body, and reach such a pitch of**

madness as to forget that we are members one of another? Remember the words of the Lord Jesus; for he said, “Woe unto that man: it were better for him if he had not been born than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a millstone be hung on him, and he be cast into the sea, than that he should turn aside one of my elect.”

*[Clement.op. cit., 46:7f.]*

The thesis that the election is corporate and comprehends individual men only in identification and association with the elect body is completely

consonant with John's thesis:

**This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son of God has not the life. (1 John 5:11, 12)**

As there is life only in the Son, so the election is only in the Son, who is our Life (Col. 3:4)—the Way, the Truth, and the Life, apart from whom no man comes to the Father (John 14:6)—the Son who is the one Mediator between God and men, the Living Covenant of Grace and Reconciliation, the Elect, the electing God, and Himself the



# *A Ransom for All*

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## Chapter 3: A RANSOM FOR ALL

In A world in which the problems of man are many and multiplying, it remains true that in a profound sense the problems of man are but one: man's problem is sin.

Estranged from his Creator and alienated from Life, man lives in enmity against his Ancestor, at odds with his brothers, and in contradiction with himself. The election finds men, not holy and without blame (Eph. 1:4), but in the circumstance of the Fall-sinners and blameworthy.

Theologians long have pondered the problem of the Fall and the relation of Adam's transgression to all mankind.







# 1. One Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus

“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men,” wrote Paul, “the man Christ Jesus.” Profound meaning beyond all we can fathom attaches to the word *man*.

The incarnation is among the most sublime mysteries of holy truth. The Word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14). Here is the complete identification of God with man: the Word, from the unbegun beginning face-to-face with God as an equal (*pros ton theon*, Jn. 1:1) and very God, becomes very man and is found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2:8). In this act of complete identification, the















despite the opinions of some who have felt that at least it *might* have been. Denney observes that

**There are those who hold that the incarnation is too great a thing to be contingent upon anything else, and especially upon such an unhappy chance as the appearance of sin in the world. It would have taken place in any case: the Son of God would have become man even if man had never fallen; He would have come in flesh to consummate creation and give the human race its true head and a true unity. There is an ideal or**

**metaphysical necessity for the incarnation which is independent of sin.**

*[James Denney. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 181.]*

It is perhaps true to say that there were necessities for the incarnation other than for the atonement. At least it is true to say that the incarnation served more than a single purpose and was indeed in order to the consummation of creation and the federal unity of humanity in the Creator Himself. Some, however, have even regarded the incarnation as redemptive in nature, sufficiently so to be fully efficacious:

Writers of the school of Ritschl [emulate] the speculative character of Greek Christology and soteriology. It is a Logos Christology, determined fundamentally by the idea that the eternal Logos takes human nature into union with Himself in the womb of the Virgin, and by doing so achieves the redemption of the race. In Christ's person humanity is actually redeemed and made one with the divine. The logic of this conception would entitle us to say that the incarnation-not in an ethical

sense, as including the whole manifestation of the divine in the human throughout the life and death of Jesus, but in a physical or sacramental sense-was everything, and that the work of man's salvation was accomplished when the Word assumed flesh.

*[Ibid. p. 33f.]*

But the election finds men in the circumstance of the Fall, under the condemnation of sin, and for man's redemption something more than the incarnation was required. The Scriptures emphatically affirm that the incarnation was essentially a prerequisite for the atonement:

Being found in fashion as a man. he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8)

But we see Jesus, who was made for a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Heb. 2:9)

Once in the consummation of the age has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb. 9:26)

The incarnation was redemptive, but not per se; it was redemptive only in a subordinate sense as prerequisite to the central redemptive act of Christ in the atonement. As Denney has well said,

**The New Testament knows nothing of an incarnation which can be defined apart from its relation to atonement; it is to put away sin and to destroy the works of the devil that even in the evangelist of the Incarnation the Son of God is made manifest. It is not in His being here, but in His being here as a propitiation for the**

sins of the world that the love of God is revealed. Not Bethlehem, but Calvary is the focus of revelation, and any construction of Christianity which ignores or denies this distorts Christianity by putting it out of focus.

*[Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 325.]*

The Word was made flesh and became Man for the suffering of death for every man, that He might reconcile men to God. "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." It was as *man* that Jesus accomplished the atonement.

The vocation of Jesus is represented in the gospels in two ways. On the one hand, He came to reveal the Father, and by doing so to enable men to become children of God. In this relation He is spoken of simpliciter as the Son, to whom alone all others must owe it that they have the knowledge of the Father and a place among the children (Matt. 11:27 ff.). On the other hand, He came to bring in the Kingdom of God and to secure for men their citizenship in this divine commonwealth. In (his relation He is spoken of as



**the Son of Man.... Whenever He speaks of [His] sufferings, as He does again and again, they are the sufferings of the Son of Man.**

*[Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 138f.]*

“Since by man came death,” wrote Paul to the Corinthians, “by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1:15:21). Since by man came the Fall, by Man came also the Reconciliation. It does not lie within the province of *God* to be made sin for the sinful nor to die. These things Jesus did as *man*. In the same arena in which man was defeated by sin, Man, tempted in



those who have assumed that the incarnation itself was sufficiently redemptive to obviate the necessity of the death of Christ for atonement. As representative of this assumption, Denney cites Riviere (to whom reference was made in Chapter 2):

**"What was necessary," asks M. Riviere, "that the Word incarnate might achieve this work of reparation?"- that is, the work of moral reparation in which, as he properly insists, a due satisfaction is made to God for sin. His answer is, "In principle, nothing but His presence in humanity; the least of His actions had a sufficient value**

**... a single act of the incarnate Word would have sufficed for this end.... "**

*[Ibid., p. 240f.]*

Quite to the contrary, Jesus recognized the necessity of His death. Early in His ministry, to Nicodemus at Jerusalem He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). Matthew tells us that, following Peter's great confession of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, "From that time forth began Jesus to show to his disciples how that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and





necessity. It was a necessity only on the predication of the election. This becomes clear to us as we reflect on the words of Jesus to Peter in Gethsemane:

**Put away thy sword ...  
Thinkest thou that I cannot  
now pray to my Father and  
he shall immediately give me  
more than twelve legions of  
angels? But how then shall  
the scriptures be fulfilled,  
that thus it must be? (Matt.  
26:52-54)**

Thus Jesus was completely voluntary in His death and laid down His life of Himself, by His own free choice. The voluntary character of His death made it the











emphasize everywhere in my writings both that the salvation of men is bound to faith, and that Christ is the only door by which all must enter into the heavenly kingdom.....

[Christ] is the manner in which [God] discharges His work of grace in them. But why He takes them by the hand has another superior cause, that eternal purpose, namely, by which He destined them to life. (E.P. 8:4, italics mine)

Here the election (which for Calvin is the unconditional election of particular men)





























(Rom. 5:6-11; 3:24-26).

In a sense, the holy life of Jesus was redemptive—not per se, but as prerequisite to His sacrificial offering in the atonement. The validity of His death as a sacrifice and ransom for men derived from the virtue of His life as in Himself righteousness-tested, proved, and perfected. In the life He lived and the death He died. Jesus was the Elector, electing men to salvation and the kingdom of God.

**There was no other good  
enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the  
gate  
Of Heaven and let us in.**



Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. In his book *Redemption-Accomplished and Applied*, Murray writes

Whether the expression “limited atonement” is good or not, we must reckon with the fact that unless we believe in the final restoration of all men we cannot have an unlimited atonement. If we universalize the extent we limit the efficacy. If some of those for whom atonement was made and redemption wrought perish eternally, then the atonement is not

itself efficacious. It is this alternative that the proponents of universal atonement must face. They have a “limited” atonement, and limited in respect of that which impinges upon its essential character. We shall have none of it. The doctrine of “limited atonement” which we maintain is the doctrine which limits the atonement to those who are heirs of eternal life, to the elect. That limitation insures its efficacy and conserves its essential character as efficient and effective redemption.

*[John*

*Murray,*



anthropocentric. As we have already observed, while the atonement is *for* man, it is essentially Godward rather than manward. Its authenticity and value in no way depend on the response of any man, but depend instead on its satisfaction of God and the demands of His righteousness. Denney has well said

**Even if no man should ever say, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find,” God says it. Christ and His work have this absolute value for the Father, whatever this or that individual may think of them. And as it is only on the basis**

of Christ and His work that reconciliation becomes an accomplished fact, it is strict truth to say that reconciliation—in the sense of man's return to God and acceptance with Him—is based on an objective atonement. It is because divine necessities have had homage done to them by Christ that the way is open for sinners to return to God through Him.

*[Denney, op. cit., p. 235.]*

But Murray will have none of any objective atonement primarily Godward rather than manward and potentially









Reconciliation is a finished work. The tenses in verses 18, 19, 21 put this beyond doubt. It is not a work being continuously wrought by God; it is something accomplished in the past.....

The exhortation “be ye reconciled to God” (vs. 20)... means: be no longer in a state of alienation from God but enter rather into the relation of favour and peace established by the reconciliatory work of Christ. Take advantage of the grace of God and enter into this status of peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[*Ibid.*, p. 47f.]

Murray's words read precisely as an objective reconciliation, a work of Christ "finished, accomplished in the past" into which men enter in a personal "be-ye-reconciled" experience as they "enter into this state of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" and become "no longer in a state of alienation from God." But the thing that, for Murray, keeps the reconciliation from being objective (despite his apt description of it as an objective reconciliation) is the fact that, for him, "world" (v. 19) does not mean *world*. In his

chapter “The Extent of the Atonement,” Murray asserts

Such words as “world” and “all” and such expressions as “everyone” and “all men” do not always in Scripture mean every member of the human race. For example, when Paul says with reference to the unbelief of Israel, “For if their trespass is the riches of the world ... how much more their fullness” (Rom. 11:12), are we to suppose that he meant that the trespass of Israel brought the riches of which he is speaking to every person who had been, is

now, and ever will be in the world? Such an interpretation would make nonsense. The word “world” would then have to include Israel, which is here contrasted with the world. And it is not true that every member of the human race was enriched by the fall of Israel. When Paul used the word “world” here he meant the Gentile world as contrasted with Israel. The context makes this abundantly plain. So we have an example of the word “world” used in a restricted sense and does not mean all men distributive [sic].















us all”? It would be absurd to insist that the presence of the word “all” has the effect of universalizing the scope. The “all” is not broader than the “us.” Paul is saying that the action of the Father in view was on behalf of “all of us” and the question is simply the scope of the “us.” The only proper answer to this question is that the “us” in view in verse 32 is the “us” in view in verse 31. It would be doing violence to the most elementary rules of interpretation to suppose that at verse 32 Paul had broadened the scope of those to whom he is

speaking and included many more than he included in the protestation of verse 31.

*[Ibid]*

Thus Murray concludes that the “us all” for whom Christ was delivered up can be only the elect. He finds his conclusion confirmed by Paul’s mention of “the elect of God” (v. 33), by the reference to the resurrection and intercession of Christ “for us” (v. 34), and by the security posited in verses 35-39. From all of these considerations, Murray concludes

We see, therefore, that the security of which Paul here speaks is a security

restricted to those who are the objects of the love which was exhibited on Calvary's accursed tree, and therefore the love exhibited on Calvary is itself a distinguishing love and not a love that is indiscriminately universal. It is a love that insures the eternal security of those who are its objects and Calvary itself is that which secures for them the justifying righteousness through which eternal life reigns. And this is just saying that the atonement which Calvary accomplished is not itself universal.

*[Ibid., p. 79.]*







that drawn from the fact that those for whom Christ died have themselves also died in Christ.” *[Ibid.]* Reasoning from affirmations of Scripture that Christians are “dead with Christ” to the old life, sharing a new life with Christ, as affirmed in Romans 6:3-11, II Corinthians 5:14,15, Ephesians 2:4-7, and Colossians 3:3, Murray concludes that

**The inference is inevitable that those for whom Christ died are those and those only who die to sin and live to righteousness. Now it is a plain fact that not all die to sin and live in newness of life. And neither can we say**

that Christ died for all men, for the simple reason that all for whom Christ died also died in Christ. If we cannot say that Christ died for all men, neither can we say that the atonement is universal—it is the death of Christ for men that specifically constitutes the atonement. The conclusion is apparent—the death of Christ in its specific character as atonement was for those and those only who are in due time the partakers of that new life of which Christ's resurrection is the pledge and pattern.

*[Ibid.]*







**It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world. But the solution lies close at hand, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but should have eternal life (Jn. 3:15). For the present question is not how great the power of Christ is or what efficacy it has in itself, but to whom He gives Himself to be enjoyed.....**

**Hence, we conclude that, though reconciliation is offered to all through Him, yet the benefit is peculiar to the elect, that they may be**









expiated?.....

.....

[It has been] said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though I allow that what has been said is true,

*[Here Calvin accepts the proposition stated in precisely the same words offered by Georgius which Calvin dismissed as a “great absurdity.” His statement appears in his Commentary on the Catholic Epistles, published in 1551, one year earlier than his Concerning*

*the Eternal Predestination of God, in which he rejects Georgius's identical statement of the proposition.]*

yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word all or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ,



unfounded assumptions under which Calvin labored.

Murray's treatment of 1John 2:2 is similar to Calvin's:

Perhaps no text in Scripture presents more plausible support to the doctrine of universal atonement than I John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." The extension of the propitiation to "the whole world" would appear to allow for no other construction than that the propitiation for sins embraces the sins of the whole world. It must be said that the language John uses here would

fit in perfectly with the doctrine of universal atonement if Scripture elsewhere demonstrated that to be the biblical doctrine. And it must also be said that this expression of itself would not offer any proof of or support to a doctrine of limited atonement. The question however is: does this text prove that the atonement is universal? In other words, is the case such that canons of interpretation are violated if we interpret it in a way that is compatible with the doctrine of limited atonement?

*[Murray, op. cit., p. 82.]*

Having posed the problem, Murray presents his argument:

1. It was necessary for John to set forth the scope of Jesus' propitiation - it was not limited in its virtue and efficacy to the immediate circle of disciples who had actually seen and heard and handled the Lord in the days of his sojourn upon earth (cf. I John 1:1-3), nor to the circle of believers who came directly under the influence of the apostolic witness (cf. I John 1:3, 4). The propitiation which Jesus himself is extends in its virtue, efficacy, and intent to all in every



nation who through the apostolic witness came to have fellowship with the Father and the Son (cf. I John 1:5-7). Every nation and kindred and tongue is in this sense embraced in the propitiation. It was highly necessary that John, like the other writers of the New Testament and like the Lord himself, should stress the ethnic universalism of the gospel and therefore of Jesus' propitiation as the central message of that gospel. John needed to say, in order to proclaim this universalism of gospel grace, "not for ours only but

also for the whole world.”

2. It was necessary for John to emphasize the exclusiveness of Jesus as the propitiation. It is this propitiation that is the one and only specific for the remission of sin. John in the context was underscoring the gravity of sin and the necessity of avoiding the snare of complacency with reference to it. But in that connection it was imperative for him to remind believers that there is no other laver for sin than Jesus' propitiation-there is no other sacrifice for sin. The utmost bounds of human need and

the utmost bounds of divine grace know no other propitiation—it is for the whole

3. It was necessary for John to remind his readers of the perpetuity of Jesus' propitiation. It is this propitiation that endures as such through all ages—its efficacy is never diminished, it never loses any of its virtue. And not only is it everlasting in its efficacy, but it is the perpetual propitiatory for the ever-recurring and ever-continuing sins of believers—they do not plead another propitiation for the

sins they continue to commit any more than do they appeal to another advocate with the Father for the liabilities which their continuing sins entail.

Hence the scope, the exclusiveness, and the perpetuity of the propitiation provided sufficient reason for John to say, “not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

*[Ibid., p. 83f.]*

Murray augments his argument:

It is worthy of note that John in this text speaks of Jesus as

the propitiation-“and he is the propitiation for our sins.”

It is highly probable that this form of statement points to “Jesus Christ the righteous” as not only the one who made propitiation once for all by his sacrifice on the cross, but as the one who is the abiding embodiment of the propitiatory virtue accruing from his once-for-all accomplishment and also as the one who offers to those who trust in him an ever-availing propitiatory.....

It is because Jesus made propitiation and is the abiding propitiatory that he

is the advocate with the Father. If we give to the propitiation an extent far beyond that of his advocacy we inject something which is hardly compatible with this complementation.....

It is this complex of thought that makes it difficult for us to place even this text in the framework of universal propitiation.

*[Ibid., p. 84f.]*

Thus Murray labors long to remove 1 John 2:2 from “the framework of universal propitiation.” The assumptions he makes to accommodate the text to his theology are apparent. Without pausing to comment at

length on Murray's treatment of 1 John 2:2. let us consider a passage which Murray did not treat in his consideration of the question of the extent of the atonement: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1). Calvin comments:

Even denying the Lord that bought them. Though Christ may be denied in various ways, yet Peter, as I think, refers here to what is

expressed by Jude, that is, when the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness; for Christ redeemed us, that he might have a people separated from all the pollutions of the world, and devoted to holiness and innocency. They, then, who throw off the bridle and give themselves up to all kinds of licentiousness are not unjustly said to deny Christ by whom they have been redeemed.

*[Calvin, op. cit., ad loc., latter bold italics mine.]*

Murray's position-the Westminster doctrine of an



atonement of limited sufficiency-collapses in the face of II Peter 2:1. The text is but one of numerous passages militating decisively against his position which Murray did not treat in his chapter “The Extent of the Atonement,” passages which demolish his whole construction. Among important passages which Murray did not mention are the following, all of them pertinent to the question of the extent of the atonement:

**God was in Christ reconciling  
the world to himself.  
(2Cor. 5:19)**

**God desires all men to be  
saved and to come to the**

knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.

(I Tim. 2:4-6 RSV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

(John 3:16f. RSV)

And I, when I am lifted up

from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show by what death he was to die.

(John 12:32f. RSV)

The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world . . . the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:33, 51)

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29 RSV)

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of

**all men.**

**(Titus 2:11 RSV).**

**The Father sent the Son to  
be the Saviour of the world.**

**(I Jn. 4:14)**

The passages cited above all have specific reference to the redemption wrought by Christ, and all posit universality. They are supported by numerous correlative passages which assert God's will that all men be saved.

*[Passages in this category will be considered in the following chapter.]*

With the above passages, we would cite in support of the doctrine of unlimited atonement three passages treated by Murray

in his chapter:

**[Christ] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world, (I Jn. 2:2)**

**Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's acts of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. (Rom. 5:18 RSV)**

**But we see Jesus, who was made for a little time lower than the angels for the suffering of death ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**





In the concluding paragraph of his chapter 'The Extent of the Atonement,' Murray asserts that

**... no conclusive support for the doctrine of universal atonement can be derived from universalistic expressions. The question must be determined on the basis of other evidence. This evidence we have tried to present.**

*[Murray, op. cit., p. 85.]*

This is to say that, in our attempt to determine whether the atonement is of limited or unlimited sufficiency, the testimony of the many passages of Scripture affirming the

















bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” The fallacious doctrine of limited atonement impugns the majesty of Him who, a few days before His crucifixion, stood in old Jerusalem and quietly said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

**We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**

**For there is one God and one mediator between God and**



men, the man Christ Jesus,  
who gave himself a ransom  
for all.

**1 John 4:14; 2:2, 1 Timothy  
2:5, 6**

# *The Election of Grace*





## Chapter 4: THE ELECTION OF GRACE

FIRST of all,” wrote the Prisoner of Jesus Christ at Rome to Timothy at Ephesus, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men” (1 Tim. 2:1 RSV). But of course! What could be simpler?

But have we tried it? Have we ever done it? Have we done more than frame a few pious phrases asking God somehow to bless the whole wide world in general? This is not what the Apostle had in mind. Paul wrote of “supplications, prayers, intercessions” for all men. Have we gone to our knees and buried our faces in our hands and wept









The difficulty of another place (I Tim. 2.4) is readily solved. Paul tells us that God wills all men to be saved, and also how He wills them to come to the knowledge of His truth. For He joins both together. Now I ask: Did the will of God remain the same from the beginning of the world? For if He willed that His truth be known to all, why did He not proclaim His law also to the Gentiles? Why did he confine the light of life within the narrow limits of Judaea?.....

Did Paul not know that he was prohibited by the Spirit from preaching the word of

Christ in Asia and from crossing over into Bithynia where he was proceeding? (Acts 16:6). But as a full treatment of this matter would be too prolix, I content myself with one word more. When He had lit the light of life for the Jews alone, God allowed the Gentiles to wander for many ages in darkness (Acts 14:16). Then this special gift was promised to the Church, that the Lord should rise upon it and His glory be conspicuous in it (Is. 60.2). Now let Pighius asseverate that God wills all to be saved, when not even the

external preaching of the doctrine, which is much inferior to the illumination of the Spirit, is made common to all. That passage was long ago brought up by the Pelagians. (E.P. 8:2)

Calvin begins by observing that “Paul tells us that God wills all men to be saved.” But after a few lines of comment, it becomes no longer Paul, but only Pighius and the Pelagians who would make such an unfounded assertion. Such are the vagaries of Calvin’s polemics.

Calvin’s argument ignores the testimony of the Scriptures that the word of God in days of old went into all the earth and to the





the fatal flaw in his thinking that determined the construction of his whole system of theology: the assumption that the will of God is monothetic. Proceeding on his false assumption that the will of God has but a single aspect, Calvin continues:

**No one unless deprived of sense and judgment can believe that salvation is ordained in the secret counsel of God equally for all. For the rest, the meaning of Paul is quite simple and clear to anyone not bent on contention. He bids solemn prayers be made for kings and princes in authority. Because in that age there**

were so many dangerous enemies of the Church, to prevent despair from hindering application to prayer, Paul anticipates their difficulties, declaring that God wills all men to be saved. Who does not see that the reference is to orders of men rather than individual men? Nor indeed does the distinction lack substantial ground: what is meant is not individuals of nations, but nations of individuals. At any rate, the context makes it clear that no other will of God is intended than that which appears in the external preaching of the

**Gospel. Thus Paul means that God wills the salvation of all whom He mercifully invites by preaching to Christ.**

*[Ibid.]*

Similar are Calvin's comments on I Timothy 2:4 in his *Commentaries*. He begins by asserting that "God has at heart the salvation of all, because he invites all to the acknowledgment of his truth." But after a few sentences, he asserts that

**the Apostle simply means that there is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation;**



because God wishes that the gospel should be proclaimed to all without exception. Now the preaching of the gospel gives life; and hence he justly concludes that God invites all equally to partake salvation. But the present discourse relates to classes of men, and not to individual persons; for his sole object is to include in this number princes and foreign nations. That God wishes the doctrine of salvation to be enjoyed by them as well as others is evident from the passages already quoted, and from other passages of a

similar nature. Not without good reason was it said, “Now, kings, understand,” and again, in the same Psalm, “I will give thee the Gentiles for an inheritance, and the ends of the earth for a possession.” (Ps. 2:8, 10). In a word, Paul intended to show that it is our duty to consider, not what kind of persons the princes at that time were, but what God wished them to be.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

In view of the monothetic will of God which Calvin continually posits, how is it that he writes



classes of men” is without foundation and was only a device by which he sought to evade a simple, categorical affirmation of the Apostle which spells shipwreck for Calvin’s whole system of theology.

Calvin’s treatment of 2Peter 3:9 is equally artificial. He comments

**Not willing that any should perish. So wonderful is his love towards mankind that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost.....**

.....

**But it may be asked. If God**

wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish? To this my answer is that no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his will as made known to us in the gospel. For God there stretches forth his hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to himself, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc]*

Thus the will of God that no man



Calvin on John 3:16 offers more of the same:

That whomever believeth on him may not perish. ... he has employed the universal term whosoever, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the import of the term World, which he formerly used; for though nothing will be found in the world that is worthy of the favour of God, yet he shows himself to be reconciled to the whole world when he invites all men without exception to the

faith of Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life.

Let us remember, on the other hand, that while life is promised universally to all who believe in Christ, still faith is not common to all. For Christ is made known and held out to the view of all, but the elect alone are they whose eyes God opens, that they may seek him by faith.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

Here again is an offer to “all,” but an offer circumscribed by the “hidden purpose” of the



unconditional election and reprobation of particular men. On verse 17 Calvin comments

**For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world. It is a confirmation of the preceding statement; for it was not in vain that God sent his own Son to us. He came not to destroy; and therefore it follows that it is the peculiar office of the Son of God that all who believe may obtain salvation by him. There is now no reason why any man should be in a state of hesitation, or of distressing anxiety, as to the manner in which he may**

escape death, when we believe that it was the purpose of God that Christ should deliver us from it. The word world is again repeated, that no man may think himself wholly excluded, if he only keep the road of faith.....

.. they who reject the grace offered in him deserve to find him the Judge and Avenger of contempt so unworthy and base. A striking instance of this may be seen in the Gospel; for though it is strictly the power of God for salvation to everyone who believeth, (Rom. 1:16), the ingratitude

of many causes it to become to them death ..... the Gospel is especially, and in the first instance, appointed for believers, that it may be salvation to them; but afterwards [others] will not escape unpunished who, despising the grace of Christ, chose to have him as the Author of death rather than of life.

*[Ibid]*

Here Calvin affirms human agency: “they who reject the grace offered in Christ... the ingratitude of many causes it to become to them death . . . [they] will not escape unpunished who, despising the grace of Christ,





**There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isa. 45:21 f.)**

“The grace of God,” wrote Paul to Titus, “has appeared for the salvation of all men” (2:11 RSV). As might be expected, Calvin comments that Paul “does not mean individual men, but rather describes individual classes, or various ranks of life.”

*[Calvin. Commentaries, ad loc.]*

Fairbairn disagrees:

... the grace of God in its saving design and properties toward men "that grace of God (as Bishop Beveridge puts it) whereby alone it is possible for mankind to be saved" ... presents and offers salvation to all. and in that sense brings it.....

In a word, the salvation-bringing grace of God is without respect of persons; it is unfolded to men indiscriminately, or to sinners of every name, simply as such. [Patrick Fairbairn, Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, p.

278.] "Grace . . . came by Jesus Christ," as John declared (1:17). The whole life of Jesus was a manifestation of the grace of God toward men, especially in the days of His ministry, as reflected in many incidents recorded in the Gospels. But Huther is correct in asserting that "it need hardly be said that [Paul] is speaking here not simply of a revelation of the divine grace by teaching, but also of its appearance in ad. viz. in the act of redemption."

*[Joh. Ed. Huther, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus,*





all men be saved, it necessarily follows that

## **1. The Election Comprehends All Men Potentially.**

That the election potentially embraces all men becomes evident also when we examine the question of the Fall and the relation of men to the transgression of Adam. The definitive passage on the question is Romans 5:12-21, part of which reads

**Wherefore, as by one man  
sin entered into the world,  
and death by sin, so death**

passed upon all men, for all have sinned.....

Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous ..... where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(vs. 12, 18-21)

The problem of original sin has vexed theologians for generations. That an exact understanding of the matter is not essential to faith may perhaps be inferred from the fact that the Bible affords little light on the question. It is not germane to our present study even to comment on the various theories that have been propounded. Denney's remarks are most practical at this point:

**It is not necessary to raise here any of the questions which have been so much discussed as to the primitive state of man. The basis of all**

theological doctrine is experience, and experience is always of the present. We may have all the experience that is necessary to convince us of the need of reconciliation without having any opinions about the first man, or the state in which he was created, or the connection between his primitive and our present condition.....

We know immediately and at first hand the only things which are of any consequence: that sin is rooted in our nature so deeply, is so congenital and powerful, that we cannot

save ourselves: and on the other hand, that God has made us for Himself and has never left Himself without a witness in our consciences, so that the possibility and hope of reconciliation are not precluded. This is far surer and far more important than anything we can find out about Adam, and it is quite independent of it. What Adam really represents is the unity and solidarity of the human race in sin; and the modern way of expressing this would rather be to say that the unity or solidarity of the human race in sin is involved in the vital organic

connection of all men with each other and in the disproportion which actually appears, in all men who have come to moral responsibility, between what they are and what they know they should be.

*[James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation. pp. 199-201.]*

With respect to the theological problem of original sin, though some questions may remain unanswered in the face of the limited information afforded by the Scriptures, certain facts are made plain. First, it is certain from Romans 5:12-21 that all men were involved in Adam's









care, not because they have not been under the curse like others, but because they have been rescued from it.... The human race was one mass of perdition, in which infants, even those of better disposition, are also included, on account of original sin; but the whole of it has been redeemed.

*[John Albert Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, Vol. I, p. 346.]*

Calvin comments on Matthew 19:14

**Suffer children. [Christ] declares that he wishes to**

receive children; and at length, taking them in his arms, he not only embraces, but blesses them by the laying on of hands; from which we infer that his grace is extended even to those who are of that age. And no wonder; for since the whole race of Adam is shut up under the sentence of death, all from the least even to the greatest must perish, except those who are rescued by the only Redeemer.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

Calvin's words "except those who are rescued by the only



even infants, bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's, but for their own defect. For although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Hence it follows that it is properly deemed sinful in the sight of God; for there could be no condemnation without guilt. (2:1:8)



commended His love toward us and Christ died for us-for all the ungodly and all the infants so “odious and abominable to God” (as Calvin believed).

Calvin’s position on the question of infant salvation is apparent from the following:

**If original guilt is for Pighius  
not sufficient to condemn  
men and the hidden  
judgment of God**

*[Here Calvin contends for the corporate condemnation of men on the ground of Adam's transgression, despite Christ's provision of grace for all men through His voluntary sacrifice as the propitiation*





display any such example [of faith and the works of faith] because of their age? The infants of Sodom and of Jerusalem had the same condition of birth and death, nor was there any disparity in their works. Why then will Christ on the last day separate them to stand some on His right and the others on His left? Who does not here adore the admirable judgment of God by which it is ordained that some are born in Jerusalem and pass thence to a better life, while Sodom, the forecourt of hell, receives the birth of others? But as Christ

awards to the elect the recompense of justice, so the reprobate will receive not less fittingly the punishment of their impiety and crimes. Nothing in my leaching goes to show that God by His eternal counsel does not elect to life those whom He pleases and leave others to destruction, or to deny that there are punishments ordained for evil works and a prize laid up for good. (E.P. 8:4)

Such comments as the above have provided warrant for preposterous assertions by zealous Calvinists that millions









resembling the condition of our first parents in Paradise, was the bright spot of his own earliest recollection-the law has not yet come to conscious knowledge, the moral self-determination in respect to it has not yet taken place, and therefore the sin-principle is still lying in the slumber of death.....

This is certainly a status securitatis, but one morally indifferent, not immoral, and not extending beyond the childhood unconscious of the entole.

*[H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the*



*Epistle to the Romans, p.  
271.]*

Strong offers a pertinent quotation:

The atonement has come to all men and upon all men. Its co-extensiveness with the effects of Adam's sin is seen in that all creatures, such as infants and insane persons, incapable of refusing it, are saved without their consent, just as they were involved in the sin of Adam without their consent. The reason why others are not saved is because when the atonement comes to them

and upon them, instead of consenting to be included in it, they reject it. If they are born under the curse, so likewise they are born under the atonement which is intended to remove that curse; they remain under its shelter till they are old enough to repudiate it; they shut out its influences as a man closes his window-blind to shut out the beams of the sun; they ward them off by direct opposition, as a man builds dykes around his field to keep out the streams which would otherwise flow in and fertilize the soil.

*[Augustus Hopkins Strong.]*



opinion thus: God created all men to salvation by an immutable counsel and without distinction. But as He foresaw the defection of Adam, in order that His election might nevertheless remain firm and stable, He applied a remedy which should be common to all. So the election of the whole human race is made stable in Christ, so that no one may perish except the man who deletes his name from the book of life by his obstinacy. On the other hand, as God foresaw that some would persist to the last in malice and contempt

of grace, these He reprobated by His foreknowledge, unless they should repent. This is the source of reprobation, and the wicked deprive themselves of the universal benefit of election outside the counsel and will of God. He declares that all who teach that certain men are positively and absolutely chosen to salvation and others destined to destruction think of God unworthily, attributing to Him a severity alien to His justice and goodness. (E.P. I)

Calvin dismisses Pighius's

definition of election as “the trite prattle of a schoolboy.” In our own day, all who have read Barth on election will recognize in Calvin’s description of Pighius’s definition a summary of the central thesis of Barth’s doctrine of election. The election, according to Barth, by design of God comprehends all men. Every man is elect in Jesus Christ unless he chooses to become

**... one who is isolated over against God by his own choice, and who in and with this isolation must be rejected by God.....**

**In defiance of God and to his own destruction he may**

**indeed behave and conduct himself as isolated man, and therefore as the man who is rejected by God. (K.D. II: I, p.316)**

There is one principal difference between the definitions of Pighius and Barth. While Pighius (as defined by Calvin) allows for the finality of reprobation by the persistent decision of men (failure to repent), Barth asserts that the choice of the man who deliberately isolates himself against God by his own choice is overruled by God, for “the choice of the godless man is void.”

*[Ibid.. p. 306. Barth denied universalism, but whether he*















## **2. The Election Comprehends No Man Unconditionally.**

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” wrote Paul to the Corinthians (11:5:19). Having declared God’s act of universal reconciliation, accomplished for all men once for all for ever in the historical act of atonement wrought by Christ, Paul immediately posits the personal response whereby each man must ratify the reconciliation for himself as an individual: “be ye reconciled to God” (v. 20). In Christ and His redemptive act, God has done all that needs to be done for the reconciliation of all men to

Himself-except what men themselves must do. Thus the gracious provision for the reconciliation of all men is limited in its application by one factor alone: the personal response of individual men. Meyer comments on 2Corinthians 5:19

**It applies to the whole human race.....The reconciliation of all men took place objectively through Christ's death, although the subjective appropriation of it is conditioned by the faith of the individual.**

*[H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, p.*













are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Calvin's comments are excellent:

**For by grace are ye saved. This is an inference from the former statements. Having treated of election and of effectual calling, he arrives at this general conclusion, that they had obtained salvation by faith alone. First, he asserts that the salvation of the Ephesians was entirely the work, the gracious work of God. But then they had obtained this grace by faith. On one side, we must look at God: and, on the other, at**

man. God declares that he owes us nothing, so that salvation is not a reward or recompense, but unmixed grace. The next question is, in what way do men receive that salvation which is offered to them by the hand of God? The answer is, by faith; and hence he concludes that nothing connected with it is our own. If, on the part of God, it is grace alone, and if we bring nothing but faith, which strips us of all commendation, it follows that salvation does not come from us.

Ought we not then to be

silent about free-will, and good intentions, and fancied preparations, and merits, and satisfactions?

*[Though we may well be silent about “merits and satisfactions,” we must not be altogether silent about intentions and preparations, for Scripture has some important things to say about these matters. And certainly we must by no means be silent about "free-will." or to use Scripture's grand term, “whosoever will.”]*

.....  
When, on the part of man, the act of receiving salvation is made to consist in faith

alone, all other means on which men are accustomed to rely are discarded. Faith, then, brings a man empty to God, that he may be filled with the blessings of Christ. And so he adds, not of yourselves; that, claiming nothing for themselves, they may acknowledge God alone as the author of their salvation.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

It cannot be questioned that the Scriptures categorically affirm that salvation proceeds from the grace of God and comes to man by faith. But the question arises, Whence comes faith? There is in











[Matt. 8:10f.; Jn. 1:7,11f. (the question of agency in the faith posited in Jn. 1:12 is determined by v. 7 rather than v. 13. which properly has reference to Christ; cf. my work *Life in the Son*. footnote p. 91); Jn. 2:50; Jn. 3:14-18; Jn. 5:32-47; Jn. 6:32-35,51; Jn. 7:17; Jn. 8:24 and context; Jn. 10:37f.; Jn. 12:32,44-50; Jn. 16:8f.; Acts 10:34-43; Acts 13:38-41; Acts 14:22; Acts 17:24-34; Acts 28:23-38; Rom. 1:16-20; Rom. 3:21-5:2; Rom. 16:26; Gal. 2:16-3:29; I Thess. 2:13; I Thess. 3:1-8; I Tim. 2:4; I

Tim. 4:16; I Tim. 6:9-14; II  
Tim. 2:12; II Tim. 2:18; I I  
Tim. 4:1-4; Heb. 2:1-4; Heb.  
3:1-4:16; Heb. 5:9; Hcb.  
6:4-15; Heb. 10:19-39; Heb.  
11:1-12:29; Heb. 13:7-17;  
Jas. 1:18-21; Jas. 2:14-26;  
2Pet. 1:10f ; 2Pet. 2; 2Pet.  
3:16-18; I Jn. 1:5-2:6; I Jn.  
2:23-25,28; Jude 20f.; Rev.  
2:10f.; Rev. 2:17; Rev.  
2:25-29; Rev. 3:4-6; Rev.  
3:11-13; Rev. 3:19-22; Rev.  
22:14-19.]

The Scriptures affirm that faith is the gracious gift of God to man, and they also affirm that faith is something in man which is *of* man, of which God takes











individual men, God takes account of nothing in men (monergism). Calvin's erroneous assumptions so completely conditioned his approach to the Scriptures that he found no place for the candid acceptance of the many affirmations of Scripture positing faith as a factor in man of which God takes account in salvation, and instead labored to accommodate the Scriptures in toto to the affirmations of faith as a gift of God to men. This is reflected in many passages in his works. The following are representative:

**Certainly they are far from honoring the grace of God as it merits who declare that,**

while it is common to all, it effectually resides in them because they have embraced it by faith. For all the time they would keep the cause of faith out of sight, namely that, elected to be sons by grace, they have afterwards bestowed upon them the spirit of adoption. (E.P. II)

... the faith by which the children of God enter into possession of their salvation is... derived from election as its origin. (E.P. 9:2)

How do we prove that some men are gratuitously elect,

unless because God illumines whom He will by His Spirit, so that by faith they are engrafted into the body of Christ? But divine election is the origin and cause of our faith .....election is prior to faith, but is learnt by faith. (E.P. 8:6)

There is no place in any of the above quotations for faith as something in man of which God takes account. Calvin has resolved the paradox by repudiating the affirmations of faith as a factor in man of which God takes account in salvation and election—affirmations which receive far more emphasis











the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The Just shall live by faith. (1:16f.)

In the dogmatic portion of the epistle (1:16-11:36), Paul considers the principle of justification by faith in its relation to mankind in general, and as Gentile and Jew (1:18-3:20); in its relation to Christ, through whom redemption has come to man and who is now the object to which faith must be directed (3:21-31); in its relation to Abraham, the



























misconstrued the passage. They have also ignored much that follows in Rom. 9-11 and the consistent testimony of the Holy Scriptures, including categorical assertions that God wills to have all men to be saved and does not will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Liddon comments

**“Throughout this section (9:6-29) no attempt is made by the Apostle to harmonize the absolute Freedom and Omnipotence of God with man's self-determination and responsibility. For the moment, the former truth is stated with such imperious**

force that the latter appears to be quite lost sight of: and the necessity for this 'one-sidedness' of statement lay in the presumption entertained by the Jews, that in virtue of their theocratic position God must be gracious to them. Without attempting to determine the relation of interdependence which exists between Divine and human freedom, (secured by the truth that the former is ruled by God's essential Sanctity and is consequently conditioned by moral facts on the side of man), S. Paul passes on to consider the other side of











into horrible darkness and thus suffered the just punishments of their wicked contempt of divine grace. Nor does [Paul] conceal the fact that this blindness was inflicted on all the reprobate. For he teaches that the remnant were saved according to gratuitous election, and all the rest were blinded (Rom. 11:5). If all the rest, whose salvation is not governed by the election of God, are blinded, it is clear that the same people who provoked the wrath of God by their rebellion and procured fresh blindness for themselves











them” whom Paul hoped to save were some of “the rest [who] were blinded” (v. 7). In his treatment of verses 17-24, he evades the issue by shifting the frame of reference from individual Jews and Gentiles to Israel and the Gentiles corporately—despite Paul’s explicit reference, not to Israel corporately, but to “some of the branches.” Commenting on verse 21 he asserts that

... the discourse is addressed generally to the body of the Gentiles, for the excision of which he speaks could not apply to individuals, whose election is unchangeable, based on

the eternal purpose of God. Paul therefore declares to the Gentiles that if they exulted over the Jews, a reward for their pride would be prepared for them; for God will again reconcile to himself the first people whom he has divorced.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

Thus Calvin salvages his “unchangeable election of individuals” by shifting the frame of reference, casually repudiating Paul’s reference to “some of the branches” and other evidences that Paul’s frame of reference is personal and individual rather than national













Tim. 2:4 RSV). That some men are lost reflects the fact that salvation, offered to all by the grace of God, is not unconditional.

Calvin, of course, taught that election is unconditional. Finding support in Romans 11:5f., he comments

So then at this time, &c, He applies the example [of the remnant of 7,000 faithful men in Elijah's day vs. 2-4] to his own age, and to make all things alike, he calls God's people a remnant, that is, in comparison with the vast number in whom impiety prevailed ... he expressly calls them a remnant that

survived through the grace of God: and thus he bore witness that God's election is unchangeable.....

... those are saved by God's power whom he has chosen with no regard to any merit. The election of grace is a Hebrew idiom for gratuitous election.

6. If through grace, it is no more by works, &c. This amplification is derived from a comparison between things of an opposite character; for such is the case between God's grace and the merit of works, that he who establishes the one overturns the

other.....

Now, though he speaks here of election, yet as it is a general reasoning which Paul adopts, it ought to be applied to the whole of our salvation; so that we may understand that whenever it is declared that there are no merits of works, our salvation is ascribed to the grace of God; or rather, that we may believe that the righteousness of works is annihilated, whenever grace is mentioned.

*[Calvin, Commentaries, ad loc.]*

Certainly all agree that Romans







passage establishes that the election of individual men is not unconditional and is predicated on faith, as we have observed.

The above considerations unmistakably posit the validity of the thesis of synergism as against monergism. The considerations involved in the question of synergism are well defined by Berkouwer in his brief resume of the development of Melanchthon's understanding of the place of man's will in his personal salvation:

**In Lutheran theology the problem appears especially in the development of Melanchthon's thinking. As did Luther, he at first**

declined all synthesis or cooperation between the acts of God and of man and based conversion exclusively on the deciding grace of God. Later, however, Melanchthon began to emphasize the factor of man's free will and with that he began to reflect on the relation between the human will and offered grace. Accordingly, in his *Loci Communes* (1535), he speaks of three causes of salvation-Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the will of man who does not reject Scripture but accepts it. In this reflection on the human





where of the decision of man's salvation. The issue is Melanchthon's rejection of any interpretation of human decision in which the superiority of God's predestination and sole activity would leave no room for any activity on man's part. This development in Melanchthon is clear in that he at first rejected the anthropological aspects (*liberum arbitrium*) in justification and predestination (the two terms by which the sovereignty of grace is necessarily indicated), but later resisted any viewpoint

which made man “passive” and ruled out his responsibility. The Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and man’s will—this was Melanchthon’s combination, a combination which has well been called “suspect.” To be sure, Melanchthon did not intend to give up the sovereignty of grace, or the sola gratia of justification, but he came nevertheless to this co-ordination whereby a synergistic equalization could no longer be avoided. The predestination that Luther accepted was not completely disregarded; rather, it lost its prominence

through this co-ordination. Such a loss, according to Melanchthon, cannot be avoided, for when one person believes while the other does not, the reason for this difference must be "within us." Melanchthon's defense against determinism is understandable, but we must agree with Kawerau when he writes, "As commendable as the practical direction was which Melanchthon by this doctrine gave, it was nevertheless in error since by the combination of the three causes he combined the

divine and human activity in such a way that salvation comes to pass by the addition of a human activity to God's. This resulted in synergism .....

*[G. C. Berkouwer, Divine Election, p. 32f.]*

It is understandable that, for anyone committed to Calvin's hypothesis of unconditional particular election, Melanchthon's thesis is "suspect" and *synergism* is a word with dire connotations. Despite the fact that Melanchthon's synthesis of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and man's will as co-ordinate elements in the realization of













reconciliation. There is also a universalism which takes into account the rejection of the gospel on the part of man, so that the universal offer does not become realized and effective in every individual. This universalism leads to the conclusion that the decision lies with man.....

God becomes a waiting God who in His powerlessness has actually been humanized. Thus the question naturally arises whether this universalism is true to the Scriptural testimony regarding God's free election.









the world to himself" 2Cor. 5:19). All that remains is man's decision: "be ye reconciled to God" (v. 20). As Meyer affirms (as we have earlier observed), "The reconciliation *of all men* took place objectively through Christ's death, although the subjective appropriation of it is conditioned by the faith of the individual." [*Meyer, op. cit., p. 537, italics his.*]

Commenting further on Lutheran theology's recognition of faith as the condition of election, Berkouwer protests

**The initiative and the majesty of God's grace is overshadowed.....  
For is it possible that this**



**self-consciousness,  
unavoidable in connection  
with man's cooperation, still  
leaves room for a full  
recognition of God's  
sovereign grace? Is not  
grace, as God's decree and  
gift, limited and obscured by  
such cooperation and  
self-consciousness?**

*[Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 42f.]*

Quite to the contrary, Paul did not assume that faith as a condition "limits and obscures" grace or takes anything away from the initiative of God's grace: "[justification] depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace" (Rom. 4:16 RSV). Faith as *condition* is the

way of grace and in no sense an antithesis.

Again, Berkouwer writes

**... the Roman Catholic Church confesses the free will of man, defends it emphatically against the Reformation**

*[“... against the Reformation”? Are Melancthon and Oecolampadius no longer part of the Reformation?]*

**and places it over against the sola gratia. Grace is necessary and active, but man must cooperate with it and affirm it. Grace comes**

first (praeveniens), but it is not irresistible. "Scripture never teaches that grace works all things by itself in the sense that man's free will can contribute nothing to the salvation of man. Both factors work in such interrelation that neither of the two will encroach upon the other." The Roman Catholic Church wants to emphasize that in relation to salvation man cannot be completely passive, and it supports its position by quoting Scripture passages that call man to activity. From this position arises the problem of whether grace is,

or is not, decisive in character.

[Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 31. The quotation is from F. Dickamp, Katholische Dogmatik nach den Grundsätzen des heiligen Thomas, II, 452.]

Berkouwer here implies that if salvation is by grace, there can be no condition—a contention which we already have shown to be without foundation. He also implies that grace is irresistible.

The doctrine of the irresistibility of grace is an essential corollary of the doctrine of unconditional particular election.

Representative of many passages in the writings of Calvin and his

apologists is the following from the *Institutes*:

**When [God] is pleased to save, there is no free will in man to resist. Wherefore, it cannot be doubted that the will of God ... cannot be resisted by the human will or prevented from doing what he pleases, since with the very wills of men he does so. (3:23:14)**

The saving purpose of God in election has been fixed from eternity and cannot be altered. But the election is corporate rather than particular, and how individual men relate themselves to God's purpose in election is





















interpretation of the election in Christ in which faith would become the condition of election.” *[Ibid., pp. 26,144.]* Yet in his chapter “Election and Rejection,” struggling to relieve God of responsibility for sin, he writes

**Theology does not afford a separate dogmatic gnosis with which it can proceed further than the average believer in understanding salvation, or in comprehending better the acts of God with man. The dogmatician may not live secretly with a theory of parallelism or symmetry, as if he were allowed to work**







**indeterminism which defends man's cooperation against the divine act, will suffer shipwreck on Romans 9.**

*[Yes, unless Rom. 9 is seen in the light of Rom. 10 and 11. To turn off our thinking at Rom. 9:29 is to miss the point of 9:6-29 and to come away with fatal misconstructions that are in radical conflict with all the rest of Rom. 9-11 and the cardinal thesis of the whole epistle: “The just shall live by faith.”]*

**But also every attempt to press the divine act into a deterministic framework and thus to make it the powerful competitor of man's acts will**

ever be doomed. For every form of competition is made impossible. There are relations here which have no human analogies.

The struggle between determinism and indeterminism in the doctrine of election is a futile one, and he who has discerned the dangers of indeterminism may not go over to determinism as though the explanation of God's freedom were to be found in the concept of causality.

*[Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 216.]*

Thus, according to Berkouwer,

















retreats to more certain ground, asserting that

... one will not limit God's freedom and counsel in electing and rejecting. Only with humbleness and veneration we may say after Augustine: what was *contra voluntatem Dei* was not *practer voluntatem Dei*  
[*Ibid.*, p. 217]

Berkouwer's endorsement of Augustine's well known assertion that what was *against* the will of God was not *beyond* the will of God is noteworthy, for elsewhere he rejects the fact of duality in the will of God. Struggling with I Timothy 2:4, 2

Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2 and other texts positing universalism, fettered as he is by His commitment to Calvin's doctrine of unconditional particular election, he writes

The attempt has repeatedly been made to escape the difficulty-God's will and its efficacy-by presupposing a certain duality in the will of God. But this unsatisfactory solution is soon put aside, the more so since it affects the urgent power of all these passages. Then again the conclusion has been drawn that behind this "will" is hidden a real will which

actually desires something else, or that it is a provisional will (universal and antecedens) which ultimately is delimited again by man's free decision.....

If those whom God wants to bring to salvation with His voluntas consequens are the predestinated, the question arises about the seriousness of the voluntas antecedens which comes to the fore in such urgent references in Scripture.

*[Ibid., pp. 238f.]*

In other words, God really cannot be serious about His



problem of responsibility for sin. For example, Berkouwer writes that

**Bavinck accepts that fall, sin, and punishment are "incorporated" in the counsel of God and "in a sense, are willed by God. But then only in a certain sense, and certainly not in the same manner as grace and salvation."**

*[Ibid., p. 177.]*

Here is duality, a positive will for the salvation of the elect and a permissive will for the damnation of the reprobate. This duality is found throughout the literature of Calvinism (with the





question of determinism. Writing on the question, he is off again, on again, gone again, where again? The following passages are representative:

[Calvin posits indeterminism]  
... that cannot be done without His will which is yet done contrary to His will. For it would not be done if He did not permit it, and permission is given, not without, but by His will. (E.P. 4)

[Calvin posits determinism]  
... how foolish and frail is the support of divine justice afforded by the suggestion

that evils come to be, not by His will, but merely by His permission.... It is a quite frivolous refuge to say that God otiosely permits them, when Scripture shows Him not only willing, but the author of them. (E.P. 10:11)

[Calvin posits indeterminism]  
Therefore the great works of the Lord are contrived according to His desire, so that in a wonderful and ineffable way what is done against His will is yet not done beyond His will; for it would not be done did He not allow, and allow it not unwillingly, but willingly.

(E.P. 10:14).

[Calvin posits determinism]  
But of all the things which happen, the first cause is to be understood to be His will, because He so governs the natures created by Him as to determine all the counsels and the actions of men to the end decreed by Him. (E.P. 10:12)

[Calvin posits indeterminism]  
In a wonderful and ineffable way, what was done contrary to His will was yet not done without His will, because it would not have been done at all unless He had allowed it.

So He permitted it not unwillingly but willingly. For the principle that here operates cannot be denied: men and angels as to themselves did what God did not will... in sinning, they did what God did not will in order that God through their evil will might do what He willed. (E.P. 8:5)

[Calvin abhors indeterminism] The distinction commonly made in the schools of a twofold will we by no means admit. The sophists of the Sorbonne talk of a regulative and an absolute will of God.

This blasphemy is rightly abhorrent to pious ears but is plausible to Pighius and those like him. (E.P. 8:4)

[Calvin posits determinism]  
Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission, the object being to prove that the wicked perish only by the permission, but not by the will of God. But why do we say that he permits, but just because he wills? Nor, indeed, is there any probability in the thing itself-viz. that man brought death upon himself, merely by the permission, and not

by the ordination of God; as if God had not determined what he wished the condition of the chief of his creatures to be. (3:23:8)

[Calvin posits indeterminism]  
I always affirm that the nature of man is at first created upright, lest the depravity which he contracted should be ascribed to God; and similarly that the death to which, though formerly the heir of life, he rendered himself subject, proceeded from his own fault so that God cannot be considered its author. (E.P. 8:5)

[Calvin posits determinism]  
Who does not tremble at these judgments with which God works in the hearts of even the wicked whatever He will, rewarding them none the less according to desert? Again it is quite clear from the evidence of Scripture that God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills just as He will, whether to good for His mercy's sake or to evil according to their merits. (E.P. 10:11)

[Calvin posits  
indeterminism] Adam  
voluntarily deprived himself

of the rectitude he had received from God, voluntarily gave himself to the service of sin and Satan, and voluntarily precipitated himself into destruction.... For the proper and genuine cause of sin is not God's hidden counsel but the evident will of man. (E.P. 8:5)

Other passages could be cited, but these suffice to show Calvin's confusion on the question of determinism, which in reality is the question of the nature of the will of God. The doctrine of unconditional particular election and its supporting corollaries of limited atonement, total depravity,







Thus he asserts that

**The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no man who would be thought pious ventures simply to deny. (2:21:5).....**

**... there could be no election without its opposite reprobation.....**

**Those therefore whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children. (3:23:1)**









Calvinist theologians of our day, finds no solution for the problem and ends his 45-page chapter on a note of complete indecision and confusion, advocating the impossible: to reject both determinism and indeterminism, and to reject causality while positing causes. As did Calvin before him, he takes refuge in the question-begging escape device to which Calvinists always resort when their dialectal vehicle collapses: appeal to the inscrutability of the ways of God. He concludes

**As the Canons put it, this way [to walk in the presence of the electing God] cannot be trod by those who speak**



lightly of election (CD, I, 13), but those who do walk upon it will understand why Paul concludes by giving praise. That praise is not that of the visio Dei. The ordinances of God are inscrutable and His way cannot be comprehended (Rom. 11:33). In a mirror we still see darkly (1 Cor. 13:12), but those riddles are spoken of in a song of love. There is no other and higher point of view. It is precisely faith and love that know of God's freedom. His election and mercy.

*[Berkouwer. op. cit. p. 217.]*



“causes-prayer, faith, and confession of sins,” elsewhere, concerned for the defense of the sovereignty of God, he protests that

... synergism must have its effects on the confession of the doctrine of election. It will always make it... a conditional election, whereby the “high tension” of God’s sovereign election is reduced to the level of human decision

.....

Only when we reject synergism ... shall we be able to obtain the correct religious insight into the

**sovereignty of God's merciful election.**

*[Ibid., pp. 44, 50]*

Calvin, of course, posits unconditional particular election and reprobation as a necessary corollary of the sovereignty of God:

**God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he would, [variously distributing] favours as seems to him meet, [retaining] the free right of electing and reprobating. (3:22:1)**

Calvinists find the sovereignty of God in Romans 9, and well they





Berkouwer resorts is the assumption that synergism fosters pride:

...the real problem of synergism [is that] it results in a certain amount of human self-conceit

.....  
With synergism, one cannot—even if one wants to—escape the contradiction between true prayer and self-esteem

.....  
Nor is it clear why man's decision may and should not be honored—even in his self-esteem—once synergism has been











the hermeneutical methods of their mentor. But there are certain passages which forbid such wonderfully ingenious treatment, as we shall observe.

Calvin taught that repentance is a gift from God:

**Moreover, that repentance is a special gift of God, I trust is too well understood... to require any lengthened discourse. Hence the Church extols the goodness of God and looks on in wonder, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18); and Paul, enjoining Timothy to deal meekly and**

patiently with unbelievers, says, "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" (2 Tim. 2:25, 26). (3:3:21)

And if repentance were placed at the will of man, Paul would not say, "If God peradventure will give them repentance" (2 Tim. 2:25). (3:24:16)

First, let us observe that, in view of Isaiah 45:22 and numerous cognates in the Old Testament, it was by no means a new thing that the Gentiles should be called to





*[The questions of reprobation and depravity will be considered in the following chapter]*

Consider the words of Christ to the church at Thyatira concerning the prominent woman referred to as “Jezebel” and His servants, who were practicing immorality and pagan customs, doubtless in a religious context after the manner of the pagan cults:

**I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to leach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I**

































asserts that

in the very head of the Church we have a bright mirror of free election, lest it should give any trouble to us the members viz. that he did not become the Son of God by living righteously, but was freely presented with this great honor, that he might afterwards make others partakers of his gifts. (3:22:1)

True ... as far as it goes. But Calvin stops short of the full measure of truth. Jesus Christ was indeed born Son of God. But that fact did not of itself make Him the Savior of men. If we may believe the testimony of the

Holy Scriptures, the incarnation did not of itself make Him the Elect and the Elector: “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8 RSV).

Little can we know of all it cost Jesus to become the Savior of men-the Elect and the Elector. There are passages which afford some insight, among them:

**We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet**



without sinning. (Heb. 4:15 RSV)

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself ... resisted to the point of shedding blood. (Heb. 12:3f. RSV)

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. (Heb. 5:7 RSV)

... my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world ... this is my body ... this is my

blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for many for  
the forgiveness of sins. (Jn.  
6:51, Matt. 26:26, 28)

... the cup which my Father  
has given me, shall I not  
drink it? (Jn. 18:11)

My God, my God, why hast  
thou forsaken me?... He  
poured out his soul unto  
death ... his soul [was made]  
an offering for sin. (Matt.  
27:46, Isa. 53:12, 10)

I thirst!... It is finished!...  
Father, into thy hands... (Jn.  
19:28, 30, Lk. 23:46)

This was the “free election.”





man unconditionally,

### **3. The Election of Grace Comprehends the Israel of God Efficiently.**

At the close of his letter to the churches of Galatia, the Apostle Paul writes “peace be ... upon the Israel of God” (6:16). The Israel of God-such is his designation of the body of the faithful, all who “walk according to this rule”-the principle of life as new creatures, not through circumcision or ceremonial ordinances and observances, but through faith in Jesus Christ, in whose cross was Paul's boast and rejoicing (vs. 14-16). It is in the Israel of





















election. Calvin continually confused the two. Representative of many passages exhibiting his confusion of predestination with election are the following:

**The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life and adjudges others to eternal death no man who would be thought pious ventures simply to deny.... By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are**

preordained to eternal life,  
others to eternal damnation;  
and accordingly as each has  
been created for one or  
other of these ends, we say  
that he has been  
predestinated to life or to  
death. (3:21:5)

[God engrafts] those who are  
elect in Christ into His body  
... calling and justifying in His  
own time those who were  
predestined before the  
foundation of the world. (E.P.  
8:4)

Of the Eternal Election, by  
Which God Has  
Predestinated Some to  
Salvation and Others to























whom He will dwell for ever—the Israel of God, forever blessed is realized the election of grace.

**Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people. Visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.**

**PSALM 106:4, 5**

**The Called According to  
His Purpose**

*And we know that all things*



## Chapter 5: THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE

SHE WAS a widow. Less than a week had passed since we had made our sorrowful way out to the cemetery to bury the body of her teen-aged daughter, her only child, victim of an illness of only a few days. In the evening prayer service in the village church, she rose to testify. “And we know,” she quietly said, tears coursing down her cheeks, “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Do we really know this? Someone has said that Romans 8:28 is the hardest verse in the











corollary, the thesis of a merely representative general call to all men, designedly ineffectual apart from a hidden effectual call arbitrarily reserved for the unconditionally elect. Our present concern with respect to the call of God in the Gospel is to determine from the Scriptures

## **I. Whom He Called.**

The Holy Scriptures bear abundant testimony that the call to salvation is a universal call to all mankind. God's gracious word to all men everywhere is

**There is no God else beside  
me; a just God and a**

**Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isa. 45:21f.)**

In His final words to John in the Apocalypse, the Risen Christ declares

**And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him who hears say. Come. And let him who is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev. 22: 17)**

The words are the age-long echo

of the gracious invitation of Jesus spoken one autumn day in old Jerusalem on the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles, only a few months before His crucifixion:

**If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (Jn. 7:37f.)**

The gracious invitations of Jesus are universal in scope: “whosoever will... any man.” God so loved the world (*kosmos*, the whole human race) that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.



determinism- unconditional particular reprobation as well as election: “God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom He pleased and reprobated whom He willed” (E.P. 8:5). Thus the general call to salvation becomes only a representation, totally devoid of authenticity. Representative of Calvin’s conception of the purpose of the general call to salvation are the following passages:

... there are two species of calling-for there is a universal call by which God, through the external preaching of the word, invites all men alike, even those for whom he designs

the call to be a saviour of  
death and the ground of a  
severer condemnation.  
(3:24:7)

[God] invites all to [life] by His  
word. Now this is not  
contradictory of His secret  
counsel, by which He  
determined to convert none  
but His elect. He cannot  
rightly on this account be  
thought variable, because as  
lawgiver He illuminates all  
with the external doctrine of  
life, in this first sense calling  
all men to life. But in the  
other sense. He brings to life  
whom He will, as Father  
regenerating by the Spirit

only His sons. (E.P. 8:2)

... however universal the promises of salvation may be, there is no discrepancy between them and the predestination of the reprobate, provided we attend to their effect. We know that the promises are effectual only when we receive them in faith, but, on the contrary, when faith is made void, the promise is of no effect. If this is the nature of the promises, let us now see whether there be any inconsistency between the two things-viz. that God, by an eternal decree, fixed the

number of those whom he is pleased to embrace in love and those on whom he is pleased to display his wrath, and that he offers salvation indiscriminately to all. I hold that they are perfectly consistent, for all that is meant by the promise is just that his mercy is offered to all who desire and implore it, and this none do save those whom he has enlightened. Moreover, he enlightens those whom he has predestinated to salvation. Thus the truth of the promises remains firm and unshaken, so that it cannot be said there is any



disagreement between the eternal election of God and the testimony of his grace which he offers to believers. But why does he mention all men? Namely, that the consciences of the righteous may rest the more secure when they understand that there is no difference between sinners, provided they have faith, and that the ungodly may not be able to allege that they have not an asylum to which they may betake themselves from the bondage of sin, while they ungratefully reject the offer which is made to them.

(3:24:17)





not with promiscuous grace  
elect all of  
them.....

.....

We say, then, that Scripture  
clearly proves this much,  
that God by his eternal and  
immutable counsel  
determined once for all  
those whom it was his  
pleasure one day to admit to  
salvation, and those whom,  
on the other hand, it was his  
pleasure to doom to  
destruction. (3:21:7)

*[Calvin, who insists that it is  
God's good pleasure to doom to  
destruction the great mass of  
mankind, quotes Augustine with*







chosen individuals and a general call designed only to augment the condemnation of the mass of mankind are Isaiah 6:9,10 and its New Testament cognates: Matthew 13:13-15, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10, John 12:37-40, and Acts 28:25-27. The passage in Isaiah reads

**Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn and be healed.**







understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not.... To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. (5:21; 6:10)

But Judah's blindness, deafness, and hardness of heart is attributed, not to any arbitrary divine interdiction, but to human volition, and God's gracious appeal to Judah is predicated on the fact of man's moral agency:

**Fear ye not me? saith the**

Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence? ... But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart. Let us now fear the Lord our God . . . . Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you.... Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited . . . . Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest

for your souls. But they said.  
We will not walk therein. Also  
I set watchmen over you,  
saying. Harken to the sound  
of the trumpet. But they said.  
We will not hearken.  
Therefore, hear, ye nations,  
and know, O congregation,  
what is among them. Hear, O  
earth: behold, I will bring  
evil upon this people, even  
the fruit of their thoughts,  
because they have not  
hearkened to my words, nor  
to my law, but rejected it....  
Thus saith the Lord of hosts,  
the God of Israel, Amend  
your ways and your doings,  
and I will cause you to dwell  
in this place . . . . For if ye

**thoroughly amend your ways  
and your doings... then will I  
cause you to dwell in this  
place, in the land that I gave  
to your fathers, for ever and  
ever. (5:22-25; 6:8, 16-19;  
7:3,5,7)**

In wrath God remembers mercy,  
and gracious pardon is promised  
for all who turn from their  
wicked way to seek His face.

The New Testament cognates  
of Isaiah 6:9,10, which on a  
casual reading seem to lend  
support to the thesis of a general  
call designed only to augment  
condemnation for all but a  
favored few arbitrarily and  
unconditionally chosen of God  
for salvation, on careful

examination are found to afford no such support. Let us consider Matthew 13:11-15, which follows Matthew's account of our Lord's Parable of the Sower. In reply to the disciples' question why He spoke to the multitude in parables,

**Jesus answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has. Therefore I speak to them in parables,**

because seeing they see not,  
and hearing they hear not,  
neither do they understand.  
And in them is fulfilled the  
prophecy of Isaiah which  
says, Hearing, you shall hear  
and shall not understand,  
and seeing, you shall see  
and shall not perceive. For  
this people's heart has  
grown dull, and their ears  
are hard of hearing, and  
their eyes they have closed,  
lest at any time they should  
see with their eyes and hear  
with their ears and  
understand with their heart  
and turn, that I should heal  
them.









**which he has.**

Reception of holy truth as it is offered is the indispensable prerequisite for understanding additional truth. The multitude at Capernaum had rejected the preaching of Jesus, and thus had rendered themselves incapable of understanding His parables of the kingdom. All such “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” would remain enigmatic and unintelligible to them as long as they continued to reject the Gospel proclaimed by Christ.

Despite His severe rebuke and condemnation of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Jesus yet proclaimed mercy and saving grace. It was to the same

multitudes whom He rebuked so severely, who in the past months had adamantly rejected His preaching and teaching, that Jesus yet addressed His gracious invitation

**Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. (Matt. 11:28f.)**

Thus it is evident that the spiritual dullness of the multitude and their inability to understand our Lord's parables derived, not from some divine



condemnation of all but a favored few than does Isaiah 6:9, 10 when viewed in the context of the many calls to repentance and promises of forgiveness which accompanied God's severe censure of Judah in Isaiah's day. Another passage cited by advocates of the thesis that the general call is only a representation really intended only to augment the guilt of the mass of mankind is John 12:37-40:

**But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which he spoke. Lord, who**

has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again. He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them,

Westcott comments on verses 39 and 40:

The fact which has been already noted (they did not believe) is now traced back to its ultimate origin, which



lay in the divine action. They did not believe, and they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again: He (that is God) hath... The want of belief was involved in the necessary truth of the prophetic word. This fulfillment again involved in the incredulous an inability to believe consequent upon the actual working of God according to His fixed laws. Comp. Rom. 10:16. And yet, further, this working of God, as we look at it in the order of succession, was consequent upon man's prior unbelief. The Jews were already in an unnatural

and diseased state when the prophet was sent to them. Then came the punishment whereby those who would not give glory to God by willing faith were made to subserve to His glory. The revelation of Christ, like the preaching of Isaiah, was the very power by which the existing form of unbelief was carried to its full development.....

.....  
With regard to the general scope of the passage it may be observed that: 1. As a fact, disregard of impulses and motives to right-doing makes it more and more

hard to obey them. 2. We may regard this law as acting mechanically; or we may see in it, in relation to man, the action of a divine power. The latter supposition introduces no new difficulty, but on the other hand places this stern law in connexion with a wider scheme of action, which makes hope possible. This divine “cannot” expresses a moral and not an external or arbitrary impossibility.

*[B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 185.]*

As Westcott observes, the



hardening of men's hearts. In his chapter "Election and the Preaching of the Gospel," Berkouwer says many good things in his discussion (pp. 244-253) of "what Scripture calls the 'hardening of the heart.' " He writes

**He who reflects on what Scripture teaches about hardening of the heart will certainly not be able to find the solution by speaking only of the self-hardening of man's heart in sin and unbelief. To do that, the testimony in Scripture would have to be drastically reduced, for it speaks often of God Himself who does the**

**hardening. It is typical of the testimony in Scripture that it speaks of both man's self-hardening and God's hardening of the heart.**

*[G. C. Berkouwer, Divine Election, p. 245.]*

As Berkouwer declares, the Scriptures affirm both man's self-hardening and God's hardening of the heart. Let us observe at this point, however, that God's hardening of the heart never occurs apart from man's self-hardening, and God does nothing in this solemn matter that is not consonant with His earnest appeal "Harden not your heart" (Ps. 95:8, Heb. 3:8). Dealing with Isaiah 6:9, 10 and many

cognate passages, Berkouwer asserts

It is almost incomprehensible that Isaiah 6:9, 10 has been quoted as “proof” for the hardening of the reprobate from eternity.....

In Scripture the issue in hardening is never an arbitrary, causal matter. The divine hardening is closely related to the message of salvation, to the preaching of the gospel which evokes a decision.....

The gospel does not leave unchanged the person who does not listen and remains

disobedient: it compels him to go the way of estrangement and judgment. In that way we see the ripening process, and when it is said that "they could not believe." that inability is not the result of a decree by a potentia absoluta but the holiness of the judgment of God, which is increasingly realized in such unbelief.....

.....  
hardening is not the result of a fateful decree, but an act of God which manifests its judgment upon man's sinful self-determination. And for that reason hardening is



forever distinguished from fate. Behind fate stands the impersonal power of determinism, but behind hardening of the heart stands a God who repeats: "Do not harden your hearts!" [Ibid., pp. 248-251.]

Thus Berkouwer departs from Calvin in his rejection of reprobation as a positive decree comprehending particular men unconditionally from eternity. What Calvin regarded as decreed from *eternity* Berkouwer regards as accomplished in *time* by the self-determination of men.

But Berkouwer arrives at the same destination as Calvin by indulging in a popular fallacy of













Titus 2:11, etc.). On the significance of Romans 9-11, Berkouwer asserts

It is being accepted more and more that this passage is not concerned primarily with establishing a locus de praedestinatione as an analysis of individual election or rejection, but rather with certain problems which arise in the history of salvation.....

The meaning of Romans 9-11 is.... misjudged when one explains these chapters deterministically, reading into them a system of cosmology in which



everything is deduced from God as prime cause, making human activity of no significance. Such a concept of God is certainly not what Paul tries to give us.....

It must be said, however, that many no longer agree with Calvin's exegesis of Romans 9:14-24, not because they wish to minimize the sovereignty of God, but because they recognize that Paul's words cannot legitimately bear this interpretation.....

.....  
Again, this is not an independent analysis of the

destiny of individual man; it shows, rather, the acts of the electing God through the course of history.

*[Berkouwer, op. cit., pp. 210-214.]*

Berkouwer's comments on Romans 9-11 merit careful reading.

As we have observed (Chapter 4), Romans 11:7-24 forbids any interpretation of Romans 9:6-24 as establishing Calvin's thesis of unconditional particular election and reprobation. It also forbids any interpretation of Isaiah 6:9, 10, Matthew 13:11-15, John 12:37-40, and cognate passages as supporting the thesis of the arbitrary unconditional



can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.... No man can come to me except it were given to him of my Father. (vs. 37,44,65)

Rejecting “the synergistic idea of cooperation” as irreconcilable with “the sovereignty of election and grace,” Berkouwer writes

How can the solution of synergism-also in its interest in the anthropological freedom of will maintain itself over against the unequivocal words of Christ spoken in a moment of crisis for His people: “No man can

come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him" (John 6:44)?

The word draw which Christ uses here has always attracted much attention. Kittel says that when it refers to man it has the meaning of to compel, of irresistible superiority, as in James 2:6 where the rich drag the poor before the judge, and as Paul and Silas are dragged into the market place in Acts 16:19.

Criticism of synergism has often-and not incorrectly—proceeded from the radical, the unequivocal nature of this

**word draw. And indeed, the word touches the core of the doctrine of election.**

*[Ibid., pp. 47f.]*

Berkouwer's whole case here rests on an assumed significance of the word *draw* . . . and collapses in the face of the fact that the same word (*elkuo*) is used in John 12:32, where Jesus declares, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

While rejecting synergism, Berkouwer asserts that 'This 'drawing' of the Father is not at all an act that rules out all human activity; rather, says Kittel, it rules out all that is coercive and magical." *[Ibid., p. 48.]* Thus,



**It is written in the prophets,  
And they shall all be taught  
by God. Every one who has  
heard and learned from the  
Father comes to me. (v. 45  
RSV)**

As Christ affirmed, all are *taught*. But only those who choose to *hear* and *learn of the Father* come to Him. Robertson comments on verse 45

**And hath learned (kai mathon) .....It is not enough to hear God's voice. He must heed it and learn it and do it. This is a voluntary response. This one inevitably comes to**





man who comes to Him constitutes a certification of His divine Sonship, a Sonship of which men must be persuaded before they can come to Him in the true sense of the term.

The passage affords no support for the thesis of a merely representative Gospel call not intended to constitute an authentic call to salvation for all men. Nor is such support afforded by two other verses often cited by advocates of such a thesis:

**No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt. 11:27 RSV)  
As the Father raises the dead**

**and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (John 5:21 RSV)**

On casual reading, our Lord's words may seem to imply that He does not wish all men to be saved and that His auditors were under some sort of divine proscription rendering them incapable of believing His Gospel. However, that this is not so is clear from the context of John 5:21. To His hearers, who were condemning Him for "violating" the Sabbath and were scoffing at His claim to be the Son of God (v. 18), Jesus declared

**You search the scriptures, because you think that in**





































here, is concerned with Christian living and service rather than with salvation. With respect to the latter passage, Robertson states an essential grammatical consideration observed by many commentators:

**And that (kai touto). Neuter, not feminine taute, and so refers not to pistis (feminine) or to charis (feminine also), but to the act of being saved by grace conditioned on faith on our part.**

*[A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament. ad loc.]*

Paul depicts not faith, but the whole economy of salvation-by-





context in determining the precise meaning of *tetagmenoi* in Acts 13:48. This men have failed to do who have presumed to find in the verse support for the thesis in question. Alford comments:

**The meaning of [tetagmenoi] must be determined by the context. The Jews had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life: the Gentiles, as many as were disposed to eternal life, believed. By whom so disposed is not here declared: nor need the word be in this place further particularized. We know that it is God who worketh in us the will to believe, and that**

the preparation of the heart  
is of Him:

*[But in so doing, God does not act arbitrarily, which would be in radical contradiction of I Tim. 2:4, 2Pet. 3:9, and the many cognate passages affirming the will of God for the salvation of all men.]*

but to find in this text pre-ordination to life asserted is to force both the word and the context to a meaning which they do not contain. The key to the word here is the comparison of [I Cor. 16:15 and Rom. 13:1] in both of which places the agents are expressed,



whereas here the word is absolute. See also ch. 10:13

.....

Wordsworth well observes that it would be interesting to enquire what influence such renderings as this of *praeordinati* in the Vulgate version had on the minds of men like St. Augustine and his followers in the Western Church in treating the great questions of free will, election, reprobation, and final perseverance: and on some writers in the Reformed churches who, though rejecting the authority of that version, were yet swayed by it away

from the sense of the original here and in ch. 2:47. The tendency of the Eastern Fathers, who read the original Greek, was, he remarks, in a different direction from that of the Western School.”

*[Henry Alford. The Greek Testament, pp. 153f.]*

Wordsworth’s observations merit serious reflection. The fact that the Greek fathers, thoroughly conversant with the Greek text as their native tongue and the language of daily use, found in the passage nothing to suggest the doctrinal concept implied by the Latin rendering *praeordinati* indicates that the



unfortunate and unwarranted addition of the prefix *prae*. Pertinent to these considerations is the comment of Meyer on Acts 13:48:

**It was dogmatic arbitrariness which converted our passage into a proof of the decretum absolution, For Luke leaves entirely out of account the relation of 'being ordained' to free self-determination.....**

**Indeed, the evident relation in which this notice stands to the apostle's own words, epeide ... zoes, ver. 46, rather testifies against the conception of the absolute**

decree, and for the idea, according to which the destination of God does not exclude, comp, 2:41, individual freedom ....

*[Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Acts of the Apostles, ad loc.]*

Both Alford and Meyer (above) have alluded to the significance of verse 46, “since you thrust [the word of God] from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.” The judging (*krino*) is determinative. Contrary to the ingenious interpretations of some, there is no warrant for the assumption that the word *krino* can mean *to show, exhibit, display, or*











become disposed” is fully warranted. Citing examples, Bloomfield asserts (as do others) that the passive voice of *tasso* often conveys the middle sense and that the use of the passive

does not necessarily suppose any over-ruling impulse from without. The expression *tassesthai eis* may here have the sense it sometimes bears, ‘to be thoroughly disposed for, or purposed for, bent on,’ like the similar one *euthetos einai eis*, ‘to be fully disposed for.’ Of this signification several examples are adduced by Krebs and

Loesner... in all of which passages the middle sense is very apparent. Chrysostom goes so far as to say that the expression *telagmenoi* is employed to intimate that the thing is not a matter of necessity, or what is compulsory. And thus, far from favouring the system of an absolute decree, the words would lead to the opposite conclusion, that the Creator, while 'binding nature fast in fate, left free the human will.'

*[S. T. Bloomfield. The Greek Testament with English Notes, ad loc.]*

## Bartlet comments on Acts 13:48

ordained to eternal life. A bad rendering, as suggesting that human choice had no real part in such belief. The idea is simply that of preparedness of heart, without any thought as to how this came about. This is clear from the account of the Jews' unreadiness: they 'judged themselves unworthy' (in the sense of Matt. 22:8, 'The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy'—i.e. as making light of it, verse 5). Thus all is conceived to turn ultimately

on man's own choice. Like the Pharisees in Luke 7:30, the Jews 'rejected for themselves the counsel of God.' No divine 'decree' ordained the result either way. The best rendering then would be, 'were (found) disposed to eternal life,' which preserves the exact shade of the verb ('to set in order, arrange, dispose') [Cf. Thayer.] and has just that degree of ambiguity which belongs to the original.

*[J. Vernon Bartlet, The New Century Bible: The Acts (Walter F. Adeney, edit.), ad loc]*











as supporting, or as not supporting, the doctrine of positive reprobation. The matter hinges on the reference assumed for the phrase “to which also they were appointed.” Was the appointing to *disobedience*, or to both *stumbling* and *disobedience*, or to *stumbling* as the consequence of disobedience? All three assumptions have their advocates, and all are admissible grammatically. As Canon Cook observes,

**Commentators are divided, rather in accordance with their doctrinal views than as a result of grammatical and critical inquiry, some**

referring the words [whereunto also they were appointed] to the unbelief of the Jews, others to the punishment which followed justly upon their unbelief.'

*[F. C. Cook, The Holy Bible, with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary, ad loc.]*

From the standpoint of grammar alone, as Huther observes,

**eis ho** may be referred either to **apeithein** (Calvin, Beza, Piscator, and others) or to **proskoptein** and **apeithein** (Estius, Pott, De Wette, Usteri, Hofmann, Wiesinger, etc.), or, more correctly, to

proskoptein (Grotius, Hammond, Benson, Hensler, Steiger, Weiss), since on the latter (not on apeithein) the chief emphasis of the thought lies, and eis ho, k.t.l., applies to that which is predicated of the subject, that is, of the apeithountes, but not to the characteristic according to which the subject is designated. The proskoptein it is to which they, the apeithountes, were already appointed, and withal on account of their unbelief, as appears from the toi logoi apeith. This interpretation alone is in harmony with the connection

of thought, for it is simply the pisteuontes and apeithountes, together with the blessing and curse which they respectively obtain, that are here contrasted, without any reference being made to the precise ground of faith and unbelief.

*[Joh. Ed. Huther. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude (Meyer's Commentary), ad loc.]*

Huther's contention that immediate context militates against any assumption of support from 1 Peter 2:8 for the doctrine of unconditional



cognates. In view of the necessities imposed by context, Robertson's comments are well founded:

Toi Logoi can be construed with apeithountes (stumble, being disobedient to the word). Whereunto also they were appointed (eis ho kai etethesan).

First aorist passive indicative of tithemi . . . ."Their disobedience is not ordained, the penalty of their disobedience is" (Bigg). They rebelled against God and paid the penalty.

[A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New*









predetermination of the historical personal identities of the “ungodly persons” referred to by Jude. Bloomfield comments

**The expression [progegrammenoi eis touto to krima] does not imply any predestination of the persons, but merely imports that they were long since foretold, and thereby designated, as persons who should suffer.**

*[S. T. Bloomfield. The Greek Testament with English Notes, ad loc.]*

The appearing of false leaders is predicted in Matthew 24:11, Acts 20:29f., 2 Peter 2:1, and 1





following:

**God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom He pleased and reprobated whom He willed (E.P. 8:5).**

... they ... remain sunk in this corruption because, reprobate by the secret counsel of God before they were born, they were not delivered from it (E.P. 5:5).

**God ... determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to life, others to eternal damnation;**









deliberate act of God, reprobation is not: God simply leaves the lost to their just desert. Thus Calvin writes

**God of his mere good pleasure [elects some and] passes by others (3:22:1).**

**Those therefore whom God passes by, he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children (3:23:1).**

But we must protest that a god who, while rescuing some, simply “passes by” others in the





God as arbitrary. Berkouwer asserts that

Where there is  
eschatological perspective,  
arbitrariness is ruled  
out.....

God's election has nothing to  
do with sinister  
arbitrariness... this election  
is not an arbitrariness in  
which no meaning can be  
discerned, but the  
purposeful way in which  
God's plan is realized in  
history.

*[Ibid., pp. 66-68.]*

But the question of arbitrariness  
does not hinge on whether





election of grace, as we have observed, embraces all men potentially. Therefore the call to repentance and faith, the call to God's gracious salvation, is to all men. Calvin, however, asserts

**Paul teaches that God wills all to be saved (I Tim. 2:4). Hence, it follows that God is not master of His promises, or that all men without exception must be saved. If he should reply that God, so far as He is concerned, wills all to be saved, in that salvation is offered to the freewill of each individual, then I ask why God did not will the Gospel to be**



preached to all indiscriminately from the beginning of the world. Why did He allow so many people for so many centuries to wander in the darkness of death?

For the context goes on to say that God willed all to come to the knowledge of the truth. (E.P. 9:5).

But Calvin overlooks the import of the fact that through all generations God “left not himself without witness” to all nations (Acts 14:17), a witness sufficient to enable men to act affirmatively toward Him within the limits of the knowledge they













implying that the Gospel call is not to all:

**What then? Did Paul not know that he was prohibited by the Spirit from preaching the word of Christ in Asia and from crossing over into Bythinia where he was proceeding? (Acts 16:6). (E.P. 8:2)**

Here Calvin apparently assumes that the preaching of the Gospel in the first generation of the Church was somehow limited to the labors of Paul. But Paul was not at all the only preacher of the Gospel or the only Apostolic missionary. True, the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to carry out his plan







the Gospel call to certain individual men arbitrarily and unconditionally chosen to be the heirs of salvation rests in part on the fact that, in numerous Scripture passages, the words “called” and “calling” have reference specifically to believers.

[Cf. Acts 2:39, Rom. 8:28-30. I Cor. 1:26; 7:17, Eph. 1:18:4:14, Phil. 3:14, 1 Thess. 2:12, 2Thess. 1:11; 2:14, 2Tim. 1:9, Heb. 3:1, 1 Pet. 5:10, 2Pet. 1:10.]

Such passages, however, simply reflect the fact that those who respond affirmatively to the universal call become in a

particular sense “the called.” In like manner, those in whom God’s universal purpose of election becomes realized are spoken of as “the elect” in contrast with the rest of mankind

.

**[Cf. Matt. 24:22, 24, 31, Mk. 13:27, Lk. 18:7, Rom. 8:33; 11:7. Col. 3:12, 1Thess. 1: 4, 2Tim. 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1Pet. 1:2:5:13.]**

Reference to believers as “the called” and “the elect” does not in any way imply the positive, unconditional reprobation of other men. The corporate election of Israel to temporal privilege did not constitute the reprobation of the rest of the

















3:8), what other meaning can you give it than that God imputes righteousness by faith? Again, when he says “that he (God) might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26), what can the meaning be, if not that God, in consideration of their faith, frees them from the condemnation which their wickedness deserves?

.....  
you see that [justification] is entirely through the interposition of Christ; you see that it is obtained by faith. (3:11:3)

A man will be justified by

**faith when ... he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God, not as a sinner, but as righteous. (3:11:2)**

The above citations are representative of the obvious inconsistencies of Calvinists who endeavor to retain the unbiblical doctrine of unconditional particular election and at the same to reckon with the many affirmations in the Scriptures of faith as the condition of individual salvation and election. Their difficulty arises from the fact that they continually labor under the unfounded assumption that if salvation is conditioned on

faith, it is somehow not of grace. But quite to the contrary, Paul asserts (as we considered in Chapter IV) that “[justification] is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*” (Rom. 4:16). Far from nullifying grace, faith, as the condition of salvation, actually establishes grace. E. Y. Mullins has well said

**Beyond doubt faith is a condition of salvation. The question is whether it is also the ground of salvation. The Scriptures answer this question in the negative.**

*[Edgar Young Mullins, The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, p. 343.]*

Certainly, while faith is the *condition* of salvation, the *ground* of salvation is the grace of God. Thiessen writes

[Faith] is the condition of our justification, not the meritorious ground of it. “We are not justified on account of our faith, considered as a virtuous or holy act or state of mind ... Faith is the condition of our justification” (Hodge [Chas. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* ] III, 118). It is not “for” faith that we are justified, but “by” faith. Faith is not the price of justification, but the means





gracious election.

Wonderful is the grace of God-the grace that in Jesus Christ “appeared for the salvation of all men.” “In this was manifested the love of God toward us: that God sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I Jn. 4:9f.) As Walter Russell Bowie has said so well,

**[Jesus took] upon himself the consequences of the world's sin. In him the love of God, even when it seemed most repudiated, was reaching**

out to save. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Jesus had prayed for those who crucified him. "Today you will be with me in Paradise," he said to the penitent thief who in his dying turned to him. And Jesus crucified came back as Jesus risen. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end"—and beyond the end. As he had died for them, so now he was alive for them, and they could live in him. So when he said, "I am the way," that was only the beginning of his invitation and his promise. He is more

than an example; for to think of him as merely an example could leave us smug and self-satisfied if we imagined that we could measure up to that example, or despairing if we thought we were expected to, and knew that we never could. He is more also than the truth; more than the revelation to us of what we need to know. "I am the life," he said. That is to say. he can come to us as forgiveness for what we are, and as the grace by which what we are not may become what we are meant to be in him.

So—even when we are most

conscious of our shortcomings and our sins—we can be undismayed. We can remember the thankful cry of Martin Luther: “Lo, to me an unworthy, condemned, and contemptible creature, altogether without merit, my God of His pure and free mercy has given in Christ all the riches of righteousness and faith, to that I am no longer in want of anything except faith to believe this is so.” It is not on any righteousness of our own that we have to depend. It is by the undeserved gift of the love of God through the risen

**Christ that we can be lifted to  
a life redeemed.**

*[Walter Russell Bowie, Christ  
Be With Me: Daily  
Meditations and Personal  
Prayers, pp. 66f.]*

How often and with what good reason do we feel ourselves to be, in the words of Luther, “an unworthy, condemned, and contemptible creature, altogether without merit.” In the consciousness of the majesty and purity of Christ, have we not sometimes shared with Peter the overwhelming sense of unworthiness and shame that drew from his lips the cry, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” Who of us

does not understand and share  
the fervent cry of the hymn  
writer,

**Oh, to be saved from myself,  
dear Lord;**

**Oh, to be lost in Thee!**

*[From the hymn "Not I, But  
Christ," with music by A. B.  
Simpson and words attributed  
only to A.A.F.]*

In a real sense we must be saved  
from ourselves, and by the grace  
of God in Jesus Christ, we may  
indeed.

But we cannot be saved from  
ourselves in the sense of being  
relieved of all responsibility for  
personal decision and  
commitment, for there is an



















the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (Eph. 2:8, Heb. 11:6, I Cor. 1:21). God is “just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). And whom He justified,

### **3. Them He Also Glorified.**

Our consideration of Romans 8:28-30 invites again the question of perseverance, which has been considered in Chapter II. Because it is especially germane at this point, the following material from my work *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance* is cited herewith, including a portion cited in Chapter 2:







The certainty of election and perseverance is with respect, not to particular individual men unconditionally, but rather with respect to the *ekklesia*, the corporate body of all who, through living faith, are in union with Christ, the true Elect and the Living Covenant between God and all who trust in His righteous Servant (Isa. 42:1-7, 49:1-12, 52:13-53:12; 61:1,2). Consider the following:

**God's eternal purpose in grace:**

**Eph. 1:4, He chose us in Christ that we should be hagious kai amomous before Him.**

**Col. 1:22, He reconciled us**

to Himself in Christ, through His death, to present us haggios kai amomous before Him.

**Fulfillment corporately (certain):**

Eph. 5:27, Christ will present the ekklesia to Himself hagia kai amomos.

**Fulfillment individually (contingent):**

Col. 1:23, He will present us haggios kai amomous before Him—if we continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

To assume that eternal glory is







of the gospel” (Col. 1:23) are in the final analysis “the called according to his purpose.” Commenting on Romans 8:28, Liddon writes

**The Divine calling emerges into time and history in the preaching of the Gospel and, in the widest sense of the expression, all are said to be called who are reached by it. But of these the many are contrasted by our Lord with the worthy (S. Matt. 22:8) and with the chosen (S. Matt. 20:16), who are comparatively few. These last are called in a narrower sense; they hear and obey....**

**They are the last class described in the Parable of the Sower (S. Luke 8:8, 15), and thus correspond to the preserved called of S. Jude I. and to the called according to purpose of this passage.**

*[H. P. Liddon, Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 139, English rendered for Greek (italics).]*

To Liddon's comment may be added the observation that those who will share in Christ's ultimate triumph are "called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). If we would share in the triumph of the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we must give earnest heed to the



many exhortations to persevere in the faith, with which the Holy Scriptures abound.

Closely related to the question of perseverance is the question of assurance. For Calvinists, committed to the thesis of unconditional particular election, the question of assurance has been a vexing problem. Berkouwer acknowledges that the Reformed doctrine of election

has acquired an ominous character in the thinking of many people.....

.....

Around the halo of God's mercy always remains the

dark edge of the inscrutable election, of an eternal decision which cannot be altered, the counsel of God's absolute freedom.....

For many people the divine foreknowledge, the idea of “before the foundation of the world,” and His good pleasure have an element of threat and uncertainty rather than of comfort. They see in it the depth, distance, and unknown by which nothing that comes to us in this dispensation is completely free from threat and uncertainty. And once they are on this way, they read

into it a sort of metaphysics, an objective state of affairs regarding the relation between eternity and time whereby time represents the known and eternity the unknown, the uncertain, and therefore the threat.

*[Berkouwer, op. cit., pp. 8, 12, 150]*

Again, Berkouwer writes

It is surprising that the explicit relation between election and the certainty of salvation has often become the great problem of the doctrine of election, for this tension is nowhere found in

**Scripture. In Scripture the certainty of salvation is never threatened or cast in shadows because of the fact of election.**

*[Ibid., p. 13.]*

We must agree with Berkouwer that no tension is found in the Scripture between the assurance of personal salvation and the fact of election ..... but precisely, however, because Scripture knows nothing of any such election as Calvin's unconditional particular election, which posits an eternal decree of God in which men have no way of deliberately concurring. In the Calvinist definition, man can never act authentically. Instead,



believers, none is greater or more perilous than, when disquieting them with doubts as to their election, he at the same time stimulates them with a depraved desire of inquiring after it out of the proper way. By inquiring out of the proper way, I mean when puny man endeavours to penetrate to the hidden recesses of the divine wisdom and goes back even to the remotest eternity, in order that he may understand what final determination God has made with regard to him. In this way he plunges

headlong into an immense abyss, involves himself in numberless inextricable snares, and buries himself in the thickest darkness. For it is right that the stupidity of the human mind should be punished with fearful destruction whenever it attempts to rise in its own strength to the height of divine wisdom. And this temptation is the more fatal that it is the temptation to which of all others almost all of us are most prone. For there is scarcely a mind in which the thought does not sometimes arise. Whence your salvation but from the

election of God? But what proof have you of your election? When once this thought has taken possession of any individual, it keeps him perpetually miserable, subjects him to dire torment, or throws him into a state of complete stupor. (3:24:4)

The question of assurance is a problem with which Calvin struggled at length. The following excerpt from *Life in the Son* is germane at this point:



Although Calvin taught that, for







... experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect that, even in their own judgment, there is no difference between them. Hence it is not strange that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ himself a temporary faith, is ascribed to them. Not that they truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them and leave them without excuse, instills into their minds such a sense of his goodness as can be felt

without the Spirit of adoption.... Therefore, as God regenerates the elect only for ever by incorruptible seed, as the seed of life once sown in their hearts never perishes, so he effectually seats in them the grace of his adoption, that it may be sure and steadfast. But in this there is nothing to prevent an inferior operation of the Spirit from taking its course in the reprobate. Meanwhile, believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and humbly, lest carnal security creep in and take the place of assurance of faith. We may add that the

reprobate never have any other than a confused sense of grace, laying hold of the shadow rather than the substance, because the Spirit properly seals the forgiveness of sins in the elect only, applying it by special faith to their use. Still it is correctly said that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of

hypocrisy, they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I even deny that God illumines their minds to this extent, that they recognize his grace;

*[BUT Paul declared that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). Jesus taught that men can know the truth of His teaching only if they sincerely will to do God's will (John 7:17), which is quite the opposite of Calvin's "covering of hypocrisy." Calvin himself*



peculiar testimony which he gives to his elect in this respect, that the reprobate never obtain to the full result or to full fruition. When he shows himself propitious to them, it is not as if he had truly rescued them from death and taken them under his protection. He only gives them a manifestation of his present mercy.

[Footnote: The French adds, “Comme par une bouffée”-as by fits and starts.]

In the elect alone he implants the living root of faith so that they persevere even to the end. Thus we dispose of the objection that



if God truly displays his grace, it must endure for ever. There is nothing inconsistent in this with the fact of his enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent.

Although faith is a knowledge of the divine favour towards us and a full persuasion of its truth, it is not strange that the sense of the divine love, which though akin to faith differs much from it, vanishes in those who are temporarily impressed. The will of God is, I confess, immutable, and his truth is always consistent

with itself; but I deny that the reprobate ever advance so far as to penetrate to that secret revelation which Scripture reserves for the elect only. I therefore deny that they either understand his will considered as immutable, or steadily embrace his truth, inasmuch as they rest satisfied with an evanescent impression; just as a tree not planted deep enough may take root, but will in process of time wither away, though it may for several years not only put forth leaves and flowers, but produce fruit. In short, as by the revolt of the first man the











persevering is-to persevere!

John Eadie states the same conclusion, in his commentary on Colossians, his excellent comments on 1:23 include:

While ... the perseverance of the saints is a prominent doctrine of Scripture and a perennial source of consolation, it is not inconsistent with exhortations to permanence of faith and warnings of the sad results of deviation and apostasy. He who stops short in the race, and does not reach the goal, cannot obtain the prize. He who abandons the refuge into



which he fled for a season is swept away when the hurricane breaks upon him. The loss of faith is the knell of hope

.....  
For man is not acted on mechanically by the grace of God, but his whole spiritual nature is excited to earnest prayer and anxious effort. His continuance in the faith is not the unconscious impress of an irresistible law, but the result of a diligent use of every means by which belief may be fostered and deepened.... Thus, as rational beings are wrought upon by motives, so

warnings and appeals are addressed to them, and these appliances form a special feature of God's plan of preserving them. The apostle thus shows them how much is suspended on their perseverance.

*[John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians, p. 85f. It is odd that a Calvinist should speak of "how much is suspended on perseverance." For according to "tulip" theology's doctrine of unconditional election, nothing at all is suspended on perseverance. Quite to the contrary, perseverance is supposedly suspended on election. But when men get*



doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end. It was nothing less than the goal of the resurrection to life and glory that Paul had in mind when he wrote, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14).

The perseverance of the saints reminds us very forcefully that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints. We do not attain to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus automatically. Perseverance means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose. The scriptural doctrine of perseverance has no affinity with the quietism and antinomianism which are so prevalent in evangelical

**circles.**

*[John Murray,  
Redemption-Accomplished  
and Applied, p. 193.]*

.....  
**Let us hear the conclusion of  
the whole matter:  
Objectively, the elect will  
persevere, and they who  
persevere are elect.  
Subjectively, the individual is  
elect only as he perseveres.  
This conclusion is  
inescapable, regardless of  
one's definition of election.**

*[Life in the Son, pp. 289-301.  
The entire portion offers a  
fuller resume of Calvin's  
treatment of the question of  
assurance.]*



Despite his erroneous definition of election, Calvin was on solid ground in his ultimate conclusion that valid assurance of election and salvation is impossible apart from conscious, deliberate perseverance in faith. Right about many things, he was never more right than in his emphasis on looking to Christ alone for the assurance of election and salvation:

**But if we are elected in [Christ], we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves, and not even in**

God the Father if we look at him apart from the Son. Christ, then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election. For since it is into his body that the Father has decreed to ingraft those whom from eternity he wished to be his, that he may regard as sons all whom he acknowledges to be his members, if we are in communion with Christ, we have proof sufficiently clear and strong that we are written in the Book of Life. (3:24:5)



If Pighius asks how I know I am elect, I answer that Christ is more than a thousand testimonies to me. For when we find ourselves in His body, our salvation rests in a secure and tranquil place, as though already located in heaven. (E.P. 8:7)

Since the certainty of salvation is set forth to us in Christ, it is wrong and injurious to Christ to pass over this proffered fountain of life from which supplies are available, and to toil to draw life out of the hidden recesses of God. Paul testifies indeed that we were

chosen before the foundation of the world; but, he adds, in Christ (Eph. 1.4). Let no one then seek confidence in his election elsewhere, unless he wish to obliterate his name from the Book of Life in which it is written.....

.....

For God is said to give us to the Son so that each may know himself an heir of the heavenly kingdom so long as he abides in Christ, apart from whom death and destruction beset us on every side. (E.P. 8:6)







I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent, (v. 18f.)

Regardless of whether the church at large heeds the appeal of Christ, individual men within the church may answer the invitation for themselves and bid the Savior welcome in their hearts once again:

**Behold, I stand at the door  
and knock: if any man hear  
my voice and open the door,  
I will come in to him and will  
dine with him, and he with  
me. (v. 20)**

What grace is this!—that One  
who once had sought and found  
the wanderer, only to be  
shamefully ignored and  
forgotten, should return and  
patiently stand at the door and  
knock and ask to be invited in for  
the renewal of fellowship in the  
bond of love!

**When thou wast lost on  
mountains bleak and wide,  
One sought thee sorrowing  
at eventide.**

Now, at thy door with heavy  
grief opprest,  
He gently knocks and prays  
to be thy guest.

Dost open wide the door?  
Ah, faithless soul! Though  
thou hast wrought Him ill.

The face, so marred, is  
smiling on thee still!  
Patient He waits, till thou  
shalt turn and see  
The arms of love  
outstretched to welcome  
thee.

The love that never fails.

*[Emily Huntington Miller.]*

What grace, what love, what  
fellowship and feast divine await  
all who open the door and bid the



Savior welcome! Christ is  
Himself the feast that sustains  
and satisfies the soul.

**Bread of the world, in mercy  
broken.**

**Wine of the soul, in mercy  
shed,**

**By whom the words of life  
were spoken,  
And in whose death our sins  
are dead.**

**Look on the heart by sorrow  
broken,**

**Look on the tears of sinners  
shed,**

**And be Thy feast to us the  
token**

**That by Thy grace our souls**



cross that He might draw all men to Himself, is Himself the Election, in Whom alone we may make our calling and election sure.

Elect in the Son ...

## Appendices

# Appendix A: The Question of the Order of the Decrees

From beginning to end, the Holy Scriptures testify to the sovereignty of God and to the fact of divine purpose. The fact of *purpose*-to which creation, human history, and the experience and conscience of every man bear witness-is intrinsic in the very being of a sovereign God. From the fact of the sovereignty and omnipotence of God derives the concept of decrees, a concept both affirmed and illustrated in the Scriptures. A problem theologians long have pondered is the “order of the decrees” relevant to election. Three principal views have been











Decrees of a sovereign God who “declares the end from the beginning” and says, “My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure,” the decrees must be understood as concomitant rather than sequential.

## **Appendix B: An Examination of the Rationale of Calvinism**

Central in the theological system of John Calvin is a complex of five cardinal doctrines: (1) the unconditional election and reprobation of particular men, (2) a limited atonement (limited either in sufficiency or in application by arbitrary decree), (3) total



... that memorable passage from Paul [Romans 9] which alone ought easily to compose all controversy among sober and compliant children of God. (E.P. 5:3)

Paul in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans first establishes God as the arbiter of life and death ... who has mercy on whom He will have mercy and who hardens whom He will. (E.P. 8:4)

But Calvin's thesis of unconditional particular election and reprobation is predicated on

a misapprehension of the import of Romans 9:6-29 which is in radical contradiction of both context (9:30-11:36) and the central thesis of the Epistle to the Romans, “The just shall live by faith” (1:17).

**From the fatal misapprehension of Romans 9:6-29 is derived the assumption of monothetism-determinism, the concept so apparent in Calvin's definition of election:**

Of the Eternal Election, By Which God Has Predestinated Some to Salvation and Others to Destruction. (The title of 3:21)

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly as each has been created for one or the other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. (3:21:5)

The thesis of monothetism-determinism posited in the above quotations is



nothing for context, and to irresponsible manipulation of such critical factors as frames of reference. An objective, grammatical, contextual approach to the Holy Scriptures dictates the rejection of Calvin's central complex of theology and the unwarranted assumptions on which it rests.

Calvinism's monothetism-determinism is objectionable also because it posits a strange world view. Quoting Augustine, Calvin writes

**Who does not tremble at these judgments with which God works in the hearts of even the wicked whatever He**

will, rewarding them none  
the less according to desert?  
... God works in the hearts of  
men to incline their wills just  
as He will, whether to good  
for His mercy's sake or to  
evil according to their merits

.....

*[Here Calvin posits  
determinism, attributing to  
God the evil deeds of men and  
the inclination of human wills  
to evil. However, in the same  
paragraph he earlier had  
asserted that God is "Himself  
unable to will evil." Still  
earlier in the paragraph,  
however, he had asserted that  
"it is a quite frivolous refuge  
to say that God otiosely*







**God finds the material cause for exercising His wrath in all except those whom He gratuitously elected. For, he says, the rest of mortal men, who are not of that number, are born of the same human race from which those come and are made vessels of wrath for their benefit. (E.P. 10:11)**

Thus the mass of mankind are created with no prospect of salvation, but exist only for the benefit of the arbitrarily and unconditionally elect minority, to provide the milieu within which the purpose of election may be unfolded ... for which the













prefaces of the several editions. In his address to the king of France, prefatory to the first edition (1536), Calvin writes

When I first engaged in this work, nothing was farther from my thoughts than to write what should afterwards be presented to your Majesty. My intention was only to furnish a kind of rudiments by which those who feel some interest in religion might be trained to true godliness

.....

That this was the object which I had in view is apparent from the work

itself, which is written in a simple and elementary form adapted for instruction.

Designed for use as a primer in doctrine, the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was a rudimentary syllabus. In the Epistle to the Reader prefacing the second edition (1539) Calvin writes

In the First Edition of the work, having no expectation of the success which God has, in his goodness, been pleased to give it, I had for the greater part performed my office perfunctorily, as is usual in trivial undertakings. But when I perceived that

almost all the godly had received it with a favor which I had never dared to wish, far less to hope for, being sincerely conscious that I had received much more than I deserved, I thought I should be very ungrateful if I did not endeavor, at least according to my humble ability, to respond to the great kindness which had been expressed towards me, and which spontaneously urged me to diligence.

Calvin proceeds in his preface to assert that, in the new edition,

I have endeavored to give

such a summary of religion in all its parts, and have digested it into such an order as may make it not difficult for anyone who is rightly acquainted with it to ascertain both what he ought principally to look for in Scripture, and also to what head he ought to refer whatever is contained in it. Having thus, as it were, paved the way, I shall not feel it necessary in any Commentaries on Scripture which I may afterwards publish to enter into long discussions of doctrine or dilate on commonplaces, and will therefore always



much, that it will be a kind of key opening up to all the children of God a right and ready access to the understanding of the sacred volume. Wherefore, should our Lord give me henceforth means and opportunity of composing some Commentaries, I will use the greatest possible brevity, as there will be no occasion to make long digressions, seeing that I have in a manner deduced at length all the articles which pertain to Christianity.

And since we are bound to acknowledge that all truth and sound doctrine proceed

from God, I will venture boldly to declare what I think of this work, acknowledging it to be God's work rather than mine.... My opinion of the work then is this: I exhort all who reverence the word of the Lord to read it and diligently imprint it on their memory if they would, in the first place, have a summary of Christian doctrine, and in the second place, an introduction to the profitable reading both of the Old and New Testament.

In the Epistle to the Reader prefacing the final edition (1559), Calvin writes

In the first edition of this work, having not the least expectation of the success which God in his boundless goodness has been pleased to give it, I had, for the greater part, performed my task in a perfunctory manner (as is usual in trivial undertakings); but when I understood that it had been received by almost all the pious with a favor which I had never dared to ask, far less to hope for, the more I was sincerely conscious that the reception was beyond my deserts, the greater I thought my (ingratitude)



would be if, to the very kind wishes which had been expressed towards me, and which seemed of their own accord to invite me to diligence, I did not endeavor to respond, at least according to my humble ability. This I attempted, not only in the second edition, but in every subsequent one the work has received some improvement. But though I do not regret the labor previously expended, I never felt satisfied until the work was arranged in the order in which it now appears

.....

I may further observe that

my object in this work has been so to prepare and train candidates for the sacred office, for the study of the sacred volume, that they may both have an easy introduction to it and be able to prosecute it with unfaltering step; for, if I mistake not, I have given a summary of religion in all its parts, and digested it in an order which will make it easy for anyone who rightly comprehends it to ascertain both what he ought chiefly to look for in Scripture, and also to what head he ought to refer whatever is contained in it. Having thus,

as it were, paved the way, as it will be unnecessary in any Commentaries on Scripture which I may afterwards publish to enter into long discussions of doctrinal points and enlarge on commonplaces, I will compress them into narrow compass. In this way much trouble and fatigue will be spared to the pious reader, provided he comes prepared with a knowledge of the present work as an indispensable prerequisite.

The immediate, enthusiastic reception given the *Institutes* by many adherents of the











































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